One Exceptional Figure Stood Out

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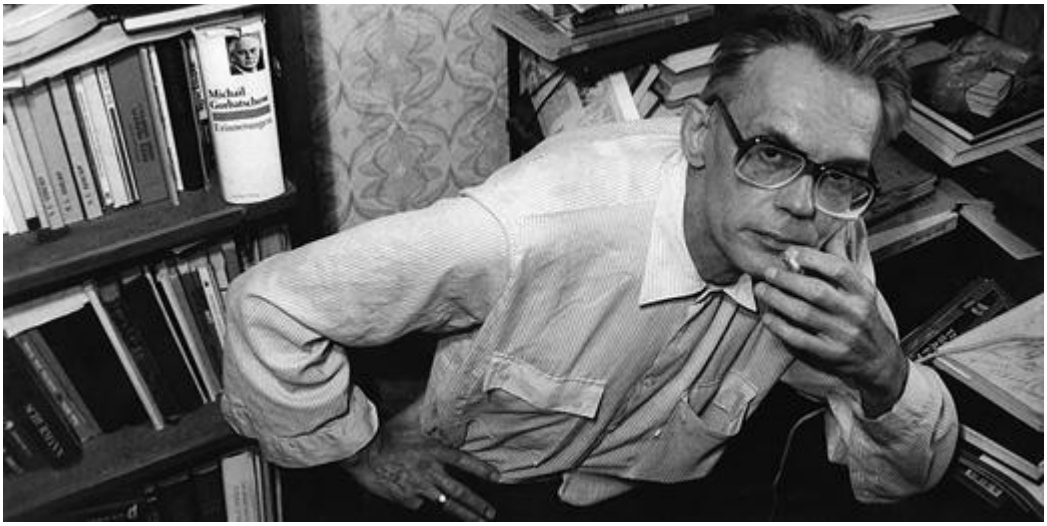
Famously, Russia gave the concept of an intelligentsia to the world. Though the term itself was first recorded in Poland, it was in Russia that it became common currency in the 1860s, reaching the West some two decades later. In historical memory, it remains the cultural marker perhaps most classically associated with the country to this day. The greatness of Russian literature in the 19th century, in a line of writers who so often appeared the conscience of their society, has much to do with that. But in Russia itself, the term in that period referred to a broader phenomenon: a passionate company of political thinkers and critics speaking out against the injustices of the established order, in the name of those it oppressed, and proposing ways to redeem or overthrow it – tribunes of the people who could not yet hear them. Belinsky, Herzen and Bakunin; the Aksakov brothers; Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov; Mikhailovsky and Kropotkin: these were among the emblematic figures of this tradition, which culminated in the leaders of the two wings, Bolshevik and Menshevik, of revolutionary Marxism. Journalists, exiles, editors, underground conspirators, this was by definition an intelligentsia without positions or place in the institutions of the state.



By the turn of the century, however, there had emerged another kind of intelligentsia in late tsarism. The creative explosion in the arts of the Silver Age, flaring across painting, music, theatre and ballet, as well as literature, is well known. Comparable, and scarcely less remarkable, was the proliferation of original minds in scholarship, with the emergence of a major intellectual stratum based for the first time in

universities, one of the most glittering constellations of the new century. Burgeoning before and during the Great War, its native development was largely cut off by the Russian Revolution. The Bolsheviks, who came from the earlier style of intelligentsia, had little understanding of the value of the newer one, and – in no mood to tolerate disinterested research or deviant ideas in the aftermath of the Civil War – drove most of it into exile, without realising the enormous loss they were inflicting on the country or their cause by doing so. If writers, reluctant to be separated from the land of their language, generally remained – Bunin, Aldanov, Nabokov were the exceptions, Akhmatova, Mandelstam, Pasternak the rule; not to speak of those who sided with the revolution (Platonov, Babel, Mayakovsky) – the human sciences were badly affected. Of those who stayed, the Formalists and their kin survived best: Shklovsky, Tynyanov, Eikhenbaum; Voloshinov and Bakhtin; Propp. Political science, sociology, economics, literary history were another matter. Ostrogorski died in time; Kondratiev and Chayanov were shot; Mirsky too. From those who were expelled or fled, Western Europe and America were the principal, though not exclusive, gainers: in linguistics, Jakobson and Trubetskoy; in history, Rostovtsev, Vernadsky, Postan; in economics, Leontief and Domar; in anthropology, Shirokogorov; in sociology, Sorokin; in philosophy, Koyré and Kojève. Other names could be added.

Once Stalin was gone, dissidents within Russia revived the 19th-century tradition of the*intelligent* as outspoken critic of the established order. Solzhenitsyn, Bukovsky and others attacked communist rule in much the same way as their forebears had tsarism; while with loosening controls in universities and (especially) research institutes, there was a modest recovery in academic life. The fall of the Soviet system undercut both. In the new Russia of oligarchs and fixers, in which money became the measure of all value, there was no place for old-fashioned moralism – Solzhenitsyn becoming an uncomfortable anachronism in his own lifetime, other dissidents not even returning from exile – while pitiable conditions of work in universities, starved of funds, forced many academics to make ends meet in murkier ways, or migrate. Politically speaking, widespread collusion with the Yeltsin regime lamed much resistance to its successor. In such conditions, it was now the corruption and commercialisation of the intelligentsia itself that became a target of the country's leading ironist, in Pelevin's scathing portrait of *Generation P*.

But in the flatlands of post-communism, one exceptional figure always stood out. Uniquely, in the mind and character of Dmitri Furman the two distinct incarnations of the Russian intelligentsia came together, at a time when both seemed to have all but disappeared. Virtually unknown outside the country, and little registered within it, he was a scholar of comparative religion and an anatomist of the aftermath of the USSR who joined political integrity and intellectual originality in a body of work that addressed the fate of his country, and the past of the world, in ways that were equally and strikingly passionate and dispassionate.

An unusual family background accounted in part for his independence of spirit. Born in 1943, Furman was the offspring of a brief wartime liaison between his mother and an artist killed in the war. He was brought up by his grandmother and her sister, whose brother Boris Ioganson was a leading socialist realist painter of the time, and president of the Soviet Academy of Arts when Furman was a teenager. Of Swedish origin (Johanson), this line was from the service nobility: his great-grandmother remembered as dancing with the tsar at a Smolny prom, Boris himself fighting with the Whites under Kolchak in the Civil War, before switching sides to the Red Army and making his career under Stalin.

This was a family, Furman said, that 'naturally hated the Revolution but perceived it as a kind of periodically inevitable natural disaster'. For such people, 'revolution is always blood, chaos and the "rule of louts". But once it's over, everything calms down and life becomes normal again. Russia had become a bit weird, with a ridiculous Jewish ideology' – but Russia remained Russia, and 'Russian artists have to celebrate Russian rulers and the ideology they preach.' His mother, however, went on to make two marriages with Jewish husbands, the first an artist who gave Dmitri his surname, the second a scion of the original revolutionary elite, whose father had been a militant of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP) under tsarism, later shot by Stalin. His son fought with Smersh in the Second World War, supposedly with some role in the surrender of Von Paulus at Stalingrad, before coming home damaged from the battle for Budapest in 1944. After the war this stepfather remained a fervent believer in communism, but not in Stalin, in time befriending others – mostly Jews like himself – who had returned from the camps. Observing such incompatible outlooks, Furman said, he felt from the beginning 'ideologically detached from all that was said

and done around me. This detachment never became anger. It aroused curiosity in me, not faith.'

At school, he realised that he was being taught Marxism because he was in Moscow, as a boy in Cairo would be taught Islam – an established creed like any other. When he got to university, he chose ancient history as his subject, a field too arcane for much interference by officialdom, in which he could study the theological disputes of early Christianity with the quarrels of the early RSDLP, whose minutes he was also reading, in mind. In 1968 he completed a level-headed dissertation on Julian the Apostate, a ruler psychologically unbalanced but programmatically more coherent than he was often given credit for being, whose correspondence he translated. A year earlier, he had published his first piece in *Novy Mir*, remarking of a recent discussion of the 'Asiatic mode of production' that the strong disagreements it aroused were to be welcomed as normal and natural in the development of any science, the absence of which could only be a morbid symptom.

It had never been his intention to be confined to ancient history. Disciplinary divisions being less rigid in the Soviet system than in the West, he could transfer without difficulty from the history to the philosophy faculty at Moscow University; thereafter first to the Institute for Study of the Labour Movement, and then – at the end of the 1970s – of the United States and Canada, at the Academy of Sciences. Making his way through these institutions, he was urged to cast off the misleading handicap of a Jewish surname. Loyal to the memory of his first stepfather, he declined. By this time, he recalled, there were virtually no Marxists left in the humanist intelligentsia to which he belonged: a milieu contiguous with déclassé dissident circles on one side and the upholstered nomenklatura elite on the other, it was generally amorphous in outlook but united in dislike of Soviet power. He believed in the official ideology even less than those he frequented, and had done so for longer: an unconditional*zapadnik*, he was convinced that the future of the country lay in the achievement of the type of orderly and durable freedom responsible for the success of Western societies. But he felt less repressed rage – virtually none – against the communist system than most of his friends or acquaintances. He neither feared the CPSU, nor expected anything particularly bad from it. Confident that Russia would eventually become a democratic society, he viewed democracy simply as a normal attribute of a given age of humanity, as literacy, firearms or railways had been of other ages. There were grounds for

apprehension about the transition to it, which might even see a weak kind of anti-communist fascism – he imagined the change of street names: Prospekt Solzhenitsyn, Vlasov Avenue, White Guard Boulevard – but it would pass. He felt no impulse to political action. Ambition for power or money was foreign to him. Academic by temperament, he loved books, shunned clamour, and was averse to meetings of any sort. There was research to be done.

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Comparative religion would be his field. That had formed the most continuous, consolidated block of inquiry in Weber's vast sociological enterprise, producing his most achieved monographs – starting with Protestantism and proceeding through Confucianism and Hinduism to ancient Judaism – and generating the leitmotif of his life's work; pursuit of the economic logic of extra-mundane beliefs that had given birth to a rationalised modern capitalism, and its existential consequences, in the West rather than in any other part of the world. Combining extraordinary erudition of detail – his later writing on China, India and ancient Israel is much more impressive than his relatively thin early sally on Protestantism – with a battery of novel theoretical concepts, the range and depth of Weber's undertaking compose the greatest single monument of classical sociology.

If we consider the field since, however, it is striking how limited in horizon, and regressive in direction, is much of what has appeared. While the history of singular religions – principally, but not exclusively, of Christianity and Judaism – has registered remarkable advances, comparison of them has not. One reason for that, no doubt, is simply the weight of Weber's precedent itself, intimidating enough for any posterity. It is noticeable that the one outstanding exception, the remarkable work of Jonathan Zittell Smith, a brilliant mind by any measure, should avoid so much as a mention of Weber's name in connection with his subject. In it comparison alters focus, completely. Taking not only an expressly anthropological approach to the study of religion, but anthropological fieldwork from pre-literate societies for much of its material, it parallels findings from the Moluccas or the Congo with texts from the ancient Near East or Mediterranean Late Antiquity in a series of bravura demonstrations. The polemical motive behind this strategy is explicit: to shun what Smith terms the 'unprincipled nature' of the list of so-called 'world' religions associated with large geopolitical entities, in favour of 'minor' religions lumped together with the

'primitives' who exemplify them. In practice, Smith's scope includes Judaism and early Christianity. Standard biblical studies of these are robustly attacked as products of an arrogant Protestant hegemony.[1] Weber's problematic, and its range, are pointedly ignored.

If the exceptional nature of Smith's gifts has made him not only an eminence but something of an isolate, his work has given a quirkish lustre to a turn in the field that has been much more general, and equivocal. That derives from two inter-related sources, one stemming from Frazer's *Golden Bough*, the other from Durkheim's *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, each taking preliterate practices and beliefs as the keys for understanding the phenomenon of religion at large. Frazer's magpie compilations were soon discredited, but his methods had a sequel in the prolific output of the Romanian mystagogue Mircea Eliade, an adept of Indian tantrism who instructed the Iron Guard in the insights of Gandhi, and went on to produce a torrent of more or less arbitrary morphologies of assorted rituals and myths held by 'archaic man', presented as an antidote to the 'terror of history'. More soberly, Durkheim's argument that religion, defined by its separation of the sacred from the profane, was at bottom society's worship of itself in a set of collective representations assuring it moral cohesion, survived his handling of Australian totemism and hope that the Third Republic would find some equivalent to secure it against revolution, to become a background inspiration for a good deal of later French thought. Falling in line with a Gallic tradition stretching from Robespierre's Cult of the Supreme Being through Tocqueville's conviction that political stability always required a transcendent faith to Comte's Religion of Humanity, Durkheim's approach took its place in what might be called a multi-authored pendant – or riposte – to Weber, a kind of 'Catholic Ethic and the Spirit of Solidarism'. Whatever the merit or otherwise of these meditations on the need for a civil religion, not a few from distinguished minds, an insistence on common presuppositions of any collective life inhibited much taxonomic thrust.

If such was, roughly speaking, the state of the art in what always remained a relatively recondite branch of learning, the last decades have seen religion move sharply up the public agenda, as an object of political preoccupation. In a context altered by increased immigration in Europe and Kulturkampf in America, and increased imperial operations by both, four anxious tendencies now populate the field. On the one hand,

postcolonial postures have generated a considerable literature rejecting the very idea of 'religion' as a figment of the Orientalist imagination, confecting an imaginary Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism or Confucianism for the colonial purposes of the West.[2] Counterpointing these, earnest Western denials of any necessary connection between modernity and secularisation – there is a Protestant and a Catholic version of this – hail the persistence or revival of assorted brands of Christianity as proof that faith in the divine is, thankfully, as strong as ever.[3] In a third variant, at a loftier level where Taylor and Dworkin join hands, a philosophy of belief assures readers that whatever they may think, religion still provides the spiritual springboard of their lives, while a philosophy of disbelief informs them of the vital need for religion, even if they can dispense with god.[4] Last but not least is the contention – Rawls and Habermas resonant, official pronouncements galore – that all major religious creeds are basically at one, sharing a treasury of common values with liberal humanism in a 'post-secular age': a celestial*pensée unique* to match the terrestrial version below, enshrined in countless eirenic textbooks on Faiths of the World.[5] A sub-variant joins the sociology of Parsons with the philosophy of Jaspers in wonder at the simultaneous emergence of transcendent creeds – Greek, Jewish, Chinese, Indian – in an Axial Age of religious awakening, an evolutionary leap forward in mankind's journey to modernity, of which we are still the fortunate heirs.[6]

Religion is thriving; religion is everywhere; religion is one; don't even call it religion. All in one fashion or another are impeccably right-thinking, all protective of their object. Only the second allows of any comparisons at all. But these typically amount to little more than registers of the degree to which the various Western societies have clung to their denominations, and the reasons that some – the United States commendably the most – have done so more stoutly than others.[7] That secularisation continues unabated across the advanced world is now so disregarded, if so obvious, a truth that a level-headed demonstration of it in unanswerable detail – it includes the United States – should have to be subtitled *In Defence of an Unfashionable Theory*.[8] In such a landscape, it is no surprise that Weber's legacy should be at a discount. In effect, serious contrastive scrutiny of the major world religions is now all but taboo; risking analysis of differences of outlook is incompatible with the political correctness – limp or strident, as the variant may be – of the period.

The maxim of an apprehensive prudence has become the tic of an unspoken phobia: comparisons have never been more odious.

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In Russia under Brezhnev, of course, none of this obtained. Nor, however, did easy access to Western scholarship in the field, classical or contemporary. In conditions of isolation, as Furman himself remarked, Russian thinkers of his generation were inevitably in some degree autodidacts, always liable to reinvent the bicycle. Furman was also, as his friend and best commentator Georgi Derluguian noted, by temperament a pragmatic researcher, little interested in intellectual genealogies or engagement with parallel bodies of work.[9] So it remains unclear how far he started writing, consciously or otherwise, in the wake of Weber, and indeed how much he knew of his work at the time. At all events, probably by happenstance rather than influence, his opening choice of topics coincided with Weber's. His first book, *Religion and Social Conflicts in the USA* (1981), focused on the role of Protestantism in American history and society, flanked soon afterwards by an essay on the ideology of the Reformation in early modern Europe. Weber's *Protestant Ethic*, written just before and after his trip to the US in 1904, set out to show that the inner-worldly asceticism of Puritan doctrines had been a decisive condition of the rise of capitalism in the West – in effect, though he would later deny this, the critical *differentia specifica* separating Occidental development from the rest of the world. For Furman, this was too narrow a vision: the implications of the split in Latin Christianity were not merely or even principally economic, but of much broader scope, and the relevant canvas for considering them was not capital as such, but modern bourgeois society as a whole. Where Weber essentially whittled the drive of Protestant theology down to the notion of 'calling' – a biographically rooted obsession of his own that he overextended backwards – Furman located its explosive dynamic not in the realm of will, but of knowledge.

Historically, specific to Christianity as a world religion was the extreme 'anti-formalism' of the teaching of its founder. Jesus left no written texts, and no more than a handful of parables. Not his preaching, but the miracle of his death and resurrection was the revelation that defined the new faith. Once, however, the community of believers had grown to a point where they encompassed the rulers of the empire, the construction of a universal church required a codification of the faith that over time

produced the extreme opposite of its original anti-formalist simplicity – an exceptionally ramified formalisation of doctrine overlaying the artless gospels themselves, its very rigidity at once precautionary lid on a cauldron of primordial impulses still simmering below, and psychological compensation for them. As in every major religion, Furman argued, this formalisation eventually detonated a revolt calling for a return to its initial inspiration. Distinctive of Protestantism was that its turn to the past unlocked a logic of the future. For in rejecting the institutional authority of the church in the name of the scriptures, the Reformers – scholars without charismatic authority, neither saints nor prophets – involuntarily opened the door to their interpretation by anyone.

Epistemologically, the medieval church's synthesis of ancient philosophical rationalism and Christian mythology had never been entirely stable, but it had supplied a comprehensive account of this world and the next, and the path of the believer from one to the other. Protestantism, in discarding this sophisticated cosmology for the bare letter of the scriptures, was ostensibly regressive. But from its irrational premises issued non-dogmatic conclusions. For since the Bible itself said relatively little about the natural world, empirical science could proceed unchecked by Aristotelian axioms, and since it had even less to say about many problems of contemporary life, a zone of ethical indeterminacy arose, where the individual conscience alone could be the guide – Puritans clinging to a handful of biblical prescriptions with such intensity because they had so few safety rails otherwise. The unwitting result was an immense liberation of human energies, leading in due course to a reconstruction of every sphere of social life. Weber's conception of the Protestant ethic offered a psychology of the capitalist entrepreneur, but alteration of monetary drives was at best a peripheral aspect of the Reformation. Capitalism itself was a far more complex phenomenon than an economy based on private enterprise, comprising a unitary socioeconomic formation whose relations of production could not exist without forces of production that included new levels of science and technology, popular education, national consciousness, legal and political guarantees of private property.

Protestantism was connected with all these interacting elements. It was enough to think of its insistence that the Bible be translated and read in the vernacular to see its impact on the growth of mass literacy and national identity. Critical in the last resort, however, was its role in enabling the emergence – before factories, laboratories or

elections – of a new type of person, trusting his own judgment yet treating his conclusions as fallible and allowing for his own moral errors. This proto-bourgeois individual was the cultural-historical premise for all the processes of capitalist development. Not that the Reformers themselves ever envisaged these. In seeking to give new form to the anti-formal impulses of early Christianity, they could not help repeating in some fashion the trajectory of the Catholic Church, soon dividing in dogmatic disputes themselves. But the crust of their formalisations was much weaker, the magma below it erupting more easily. New sects arose on one side, and sceptical religious indifference on the other. Under dual attack, the Protestant centre could not hold, and toleration arrived.

In the New World, what were the consequences? Furman's book on the United States offered a detailed empirical sociology of American churches, denominations and sects in the 20th century. Its focus became the hallmark of his comparative work henceforward: the influence of religion on not the economic but the political life of society.[10] During his trip to the US, Weber had taken some note of the role of Protestant sects in sustaining civic associations in the country, but it was a passing interest: such springs of active life were doomed, he thought, to be overtaken by the same general processes of bureaucratisation that were proving so relentless in Europe. Furman's concern was framed very differently. Why, he asked at the outset, had France known four revolutions since the 18th century, and some 15 constitutions, and the United States just one of each? Could religion have something to do with it?

Bourgeois society in America, he argued, had from the beginning combined exceptional dynamism with extreme stability: a combination that could not be understood apart from the peculiar salience of Protestantism in its formation. For, on the one hand, there was the unfettering of a drive for knowledge (Harvard founded within 16 years of the landing of the*Mayflower*, nine colleges and forty printing presses by 1769, when there were still just two universities in England), yet aversion to abstract thought – practicality becoming the measure of cognition, and success the material sign of it, in an open-ended process of development whose very flexibility insured the social order against shocks to it. On the other hand, there was biblical respect for the immutability of the constitution, treated as if it were not only the law of the land but of the Lord, at once trumping the will of the people and supplying compensation for the emotional emptiness of the revolution, whose tasks were

politically limited in a settler society without feudalism or absolutism. This had remained a country still so saturated with religion that at the height of the Cold War more Americans identified communism with atheism than with the abolition of private property. Though officially church and state were separated, the reigning ideology of the nation mingled religious rituals and symbols with secular forms and themes in a promiscuous potpourri whose very lack of clear divisions or borders was permissive of continual economic and social change.

In these rapids, the churches had themselves evolved, not only adapting to but even at times (the Civil Rights Movement) quickening them, if typically in a pragmatic style neutralising more radical transformations. Sects aside, membership of the principal denominations was now a question of family tradition more than doctrinal differentiation. If the higher the class affiliation of a church (and so its educational level), the more liberal its orientation, with the clergy usually in advance of the laity, that lay in the logic of religious reform itself, which having unbound the dynamic of scientific knowledge could not escape the consequences for its own belief system. After the shattering of so many inherited moral precepts and myths in the 1960s, a conservative reaction set in during the 1970s, bringing a political and theological swing to the right, along with an assortment of countercultural fads of every kind. But by now the secularisation of values – polls showed most Americans already accepted the idea of a black president, if not yet imagining gay marriage – could not be halted. The immanent development of faith was destroying the foundations on which it rested. If the bourgeois order was to persist in the United States, new forms and means of integrating the individual and society would have to be found.

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After *The Protestant Ethic*, Weber embarked on the first of his comparative studies of religion, with a work on its forms in China that ended with an extended contrast between Confucianism and Puritanism. Here too his focus was economic: why had imperial China failed to develop capitalism, as the West had done? Confucianism, he argued, lacked the vital imperative of a salvation religion to observe a 'methodical conduct of life' that had produced the ascetic devotion of the Puritan entrepreneur to accumulation in Europe. Its form of rationalism was too low-pressure and ritualistic, failing to free itself sufficiently from the magic rampant in the subculture of Taoism, a popular supplement it could never suppress. Still – here Weber conceded what he

bracketed in Europe – the limitations of Chinese religion were not prime movers, but the product of a social configuration. Blocking the emergence of capitalism structurally, not just psychologically, was the perpetual dominance of a patrimonial bureaucracy amid the absence of feudal lords, free towns and an autonomous church.

Reversing the order of their inquiries, Furman had in fact written on Confucianism before he tackled Protestantism, co-authoring a remarkable essay – more systematically comparative than Weber's – in 1974, when he was in his early thirties. He was familiar with *The Protestant Ethic* by the time he was working on the Reformation and US religion, but it is less clear whether he knew of Weber's writing on China. At all events, his analysis of Confucianism, matched point by point against Christianity, was quite distinct. Historically, the two creeds were each responses to crises in an anterior order. In Palestine, Judaism always rested on an antinomy: God was universal, yet had picked out just one small community as his chosen people. Conquest by Rome dealt a huge blow to this pretension. Political resistance proved futile; three times Jews rose in revolt against Roman rule, and each time were crushed. But there was a religious route out of the crisis in the teaching of Jesus, an ecstatic who believed in his own divinity, which Paul could transform into a faith beyond Judaism, no longer defined by the relation between God and his people, but God and the individual: a religion in which not observance of the Law, but love of the Almighty was the sole commandment.

In China, during the only period of prolonged internal division in the country's history, when the late Zhou realm was wrenched apart into rival states descending into war, Confucius – a sage, not an ecstatic – offered a solution to the widespread sense of moral and social decay with a vision of order, based like Paul's on the reworking of an earlier tradition, but a very different one. Absent from Zhou religion was not only any fetishisation of objects in nature, or anthropomorphic pantheon of gods, but any personal deity of a Judaic type. The impersonal order of heaven was alone divine: the seat of truth, wisdom and justice, but cold and indifferent to human beings. Inhospitable to any mythology, its worship generated no specialised body of priests, its rituals assigned to officials as an ancillary function of their work. On earth, reverence was due above all to ancestors.

Confucius – as represented by disciples long afterwards – altered this heritage much less than Paul would bend the Torah. The abstract conception of heaven and the cult of

forebears remained. But what was already the drift of ancient religion towards a moral-ritualistic rationalism, in which society was conceived on the model of a patriarchal family, was developed and codified in the ethical doctrine he would preach. The highest values were knowledge (as opposed to understanding), duty and self-control, in a harmony of which music was the ritual expression. The basic duty was consideration for others, according to their rank. Rulers were owed obedience by their subjects, as parents by their children, and husbands by their wives. But should they fail in their duties of good government, they forfeited the mandate of heaven and could be removed. In this cosmology, the priorities of existence were terrestrial. Distrustful of metaphysics, Confucius declined to speculate whether there was an afterlife. There was no revelation, and the flesh was not sinful. The time was out of joint, but its remedy was plain: a 'rectification of names' to restore the true relation between words and things, rules and deeds, as they had existed thousands of years before, under the legendary sage-kings Yao, Shun and Yu. With this doctrine, a decisive twist was given to the cult of ancestors, enormously strengthening intellectual orientation to the past, in fixing an imaginary social order at the beginning of time as an immutable standard of right living. What a redemption to come would be for Christians, an age long gone became for Confucians.

In both cases, the runic sayings of the founders required an institutional machinery for conversion into formalised creeds: the church in Europe, the examination system in China, each a limited channel of social mobility, but opposite in their attitudes to belief and power. Armed with an elaborate theology that claimed absolute truth, Christianity could tolerate no alternative system of religious belief. Confucian doctrine was meagre by comparison, not only scanting ontology, let alone gnoseology, but also lacking much purchase in the sphere of emotions, or response to existential problems. To meet the psychological needs it could not satisfy, masses and literati alike – the one openly, the other more privately – resorted, at differing levels of sophistication, to Buddhism or Taoism. Once it no longer faced any challenge as official doctrine, after the Tang, Confucianism could coexist with these unruffled. The scholar-gentry who ran the state were first administrators, and only secondarily ideologues: their energies were not concentrated on issues of belief. There were no quarrelsome Church Councils, and only sporadic persecution of witches. They could afford to be less rigorist.

In matters of state, the roles were reversed. Early Christianity was not concerned with the affairs of this world. Jesus enjoined acceptance of whatever political authority there might be, and left scarcely any social teaching. The Confucian system of ethics, on the other hand, was before all else a social doctrine. Political authority was only acceptable if it conformed to that. In practice, to entrench itself as the official ideology of the state, Confucianism had to compromise with Legalism – a body of thought in principle anathema to it, which separated the exercise of power from morality and custom – and over time came to emphasise duty at the expense of sympathy rather than as an instruction to it, in an authoritarian syncretism that tolerated no dissent. In Europe, vice versa, lacking any developed juridical or political axioms of its own, Christianity could get along with secular power in any number of shapes – Germanic codes, Roman law, French absolutism – without undue strain, so long as it enjoyed a monopoly of religious faith. Conflicts between belief and power arose in both systems. But in China they were inherently more limited. Officials had a duty to criticise rulers who – corrupted by eunuchs or courtiers – strayed from Confucian norms, if necessary paying with their life for doing so; and if degeneration went too far, scholars might join or even lead peasant uprisings against them. But in the absence of any coherent political alternative, the cyclical overthrow of dynasties strengthened rather than weakened the Confucian monopoly of legitimacy, becoming a mechanism not of social change but social regulation, whose effect was rather to stabilise the established order. In the West, clashes between church and state – not to speak of wars between states of opposite confessional allegiance, once Christianity divided – were far more consequential.

Historically, Confucianism was a more rational belief system than Christianity, and for long a more tolerant one, closer to a modern humanism. But that tolerance was also an expression of the practical cast of its reason, its indifference to abstract truth. For Christianity, on the other hand, truth was a transcendent value: the revelation of a personal God. Christian intolerance was rooted in the absolutism of this conception of truth, whose intransigence proved more favourable in the long run to the emergence of science. So too was a soteriology of the future, rather than an idolatry of the past. Psychologically, answering not to the external dictates of custom but the inner voice of conscience, the personality ultimately emergent from the Reformation was more fraught and less integrated, but also freer than the Confucian scholar bound hand and

foot by ritual and etiquette. In these respects, Furman concluded, Christianity proved in the end more hospitable than Confucianism to cultural creativity and social change. No value judgment was involved, just one of the relative weight of their ideals in the development of their lands of reference.

Composed during the upheaval of the Cultural Revolution, at a time of maximum tension between the Soviet Union and China, Furman's essay abstained from comment on the political legacies of Confucianism. He had not the slightest sympathy for Maoism, but was also wary of the sinophobia rampant in Russia at the time, in this case – his debut – withholding the contemporary deductions that feature in all his subsequent work on religion. When he came to write about India, more than a decade later, these had pride of place. Weber's study of Hinduism and Buddhism, reflecting period fascination in Wilhelmine Germany with Indian mysticism, was much broader in scope and richer in detail than *The Protestant Ethic*. Its organising preoccupation, however, remains the economic ethics of subcontinental faiths. Furman refers to it, but his reconstruction of Hinduism was once again sui generis. The oldest of all major religions, it had a uniquely long history that bore no resemblance to the path from polytheism to monotheism in the Near East and the West. What distinguished Hinduism was instead the combination of profound philosophical reflection within religion (not, as elsewhere, distinct from it) at elite level, with the crudest forms of magic and promiscuous polytheism at folk level. Metaphysically, there was no singular God, but rather an impersonal Absolute underlying at once the soul and the world, of which the material universe was no more than an illusory manifestation. The highest value was the liberation of the self from the cycle of birth and death in *moksha*: the merging of the deep basis of personality with the deep basis of the world, attainable only by perfection across successive incarnations, traversing the hereditary castes into which the social order was ritually divided. Religious truth was hierarchical and esoteric, impervious to rationalist critique or literalist incongruity, accessible only to a Brahmin elite but accommodating any number of popular cults and deities.

So structured, Hinduism was at once benignly tolerant of different worldviews, which could be folded into its embrace, and savagely intolerant of any breach in ritual practices or the segregation of the population by phobias of purity and pollution. Indian society, divided by caste, was thus by and large exceptionally stable; rebelliousness was rare. As closed endogamous groups incapable of unification, castes

could rule themselves without need for intervention by the state, conflicts between them remaining local. At the top end of the hierarchy, since the highest caste of Brahmins was defined by esoteric knowledge rather than worldly authority, political and military power could be exercised with all ruthlessness by a warrior caste beneath them, but never sacralised. Its annals were scarcely worth recording. History was of little interest: true time – unimaginably long – was extra-mundane.

If such was the schema of Hinduism, a term unknown to its adepts before the 19th century, the reality of customary beliefs and practices in India was always more heterogeneous and dispersed. The arrival of the British compressed this sprawling congeries into a more unified system. Under pressure from the West, revivalist reformers at once modernised and intensified traditional attachments among the elites, while sanskritisation became a form of upward mobility among the masses. The result was a new measure of convergence between elite and folk faith, as strains of popular fundamentalism were injected into the former, impulses of Western democratisation into the latter, gradually producing a more homogeneous religious system on which a movement for national liberation could build. Drawing its strength from religious symbols, the Indian National Congress won the kind of sedate independence to which its leaders aspired, marred by Partition, but without any social cataclysm, thereafter presiding over a steady parliamentary democracy.

This was a configuration in pointed contrast with the pattern in China, to which Furman returned in comparative reflections on the two systems some fifteen years after his essay on Confucianism. Hinduism had survived as a universe of esoteric doctrines and popular cults where scriptural Confucianism had collapsed, partly because it had greater philosophical depth, but also because it was articulated to caste, rather than embodied in the state, hence insulated against the division and weakness of the polities in the subcontinent that had allowed swift British conquest, with so little sustained resistance. In China, on the other hand, the state was strong enough to withstand outright colonisation, but when the dynasty went down to internal revolt and central power dissolved, Confucianism crumbled with it, leaving an ideological vacuum that would come to be occupied by revolutionary Marxism. But though it was destroyed as a scriptural system, its cultural legacies objectively persisted in communist – and more stridently, but far less effectively, in Nationalist – China. The unity of a single powerful state, instilling a unitary moral-political teaching, had lived

on as the normal form of government. So too had age-old traditions of popular protest against corruption of rule and social injustice, visible in the Liberation of 1949, the mayhem of the Cultural Revolution, and the retribution against the Gang of Four that followed it. In Confucian times, such upheavals had been homeostatic mechanisms of the social order, as the self-regulation of castes had been of Indian society. But now that China was successfully achieving high-speed growth accompanied by widening inequalities, the demand for social justice – still deep-rooted in the population – was no longer a mechanism of stabilisation. The Chinese expected a great deal from their state, and the communist regime had yet to reconcile the two.

The interpenetration of new institutions and old convictions was equally, if quite differently, marked in Indian parliamentarism. The forms of this institutional achievement were Western, but their content was not. Ideological and organisational principles that looked as if they came from Europe had other foundations. Congress was the vehicle of 'a highly specific Hindu secularism and highly specific Hindu democratism'. For the real strength of Indian parliamentarism lay in the power of traditional structures it concealed. The key to its stability lay in the doctrinal fastness of Hindu anti-egalitarianism, which protected its routines from radical ideologies of social change – as it had once traditional Indian society from peasant upheavals – by stifling the class struggles that produced one-party regimes elsewhere in the ex-colonial world. The same Hindu value system was a prophylactic against other dangers too – military dictatorship, since warriors lacked moral authority, reserved for Brahmins or ascetics, and theocratic rule, in the absence of any real orthodoxy or clergy. It was enough to consider Pakistan or Bangladesh to see, by contrast, the legacy of martial ideals in Islam.

In these conditions, Furman thought, Indians accepted their parliamentary government less out of ideological conviction than consecration of it by non-parliamentary sources of authority – traditional respect for an upper caste elite, the founding role of a charismatic ascetic, the dynastic family presiding over it – and the want of any alternative. Secularisation was weakening some of these props. For in eroding the boundaries between castes, it by the same stroke sharpened the boundaries of all-Hindu identification, threatening Indian parliamentarism with the rise of 'ethnic' conflicts – in Kashmir, Nagaland, Assam, Mizoram, Punjab – that were difficult to manage within the legal norms of liberal democracy. Communalism surged where

caste retreated. Nowhere was this clearer than in Punjab, to which Furman devoted a further essay.

There Sikhs had lived peacefully with Hindus, as one of the semi-breakaway sects that Hinduism traditionally encompassed and tolerated, albeit under Muslim persecution one less polytheist and more militant than others, but with no sharp boundaries between the two. When anti-caste movements arose in the late 19th century, however, competition for the allegiance of Untouchables developed between Hindu and Sikh movements of reform, leading to the creation of the Akali Dal, a Sikh party allied with Congress in the struggle against the British, but seeking to maximise its share of seats and power in Punjab. Twenty years after Independence, under pressure from the creation of linguistic states elsewhere in India, Congress conceded a division of Punjab, giving the Sikhs a state in which they were a majority and two others with a Hindu majority. But as secularisation blurred the religious frontiers between the two communities, and migrations crossed state lines in both directions, Sikh fears of being 'drowned in an all-Hindu sea' did not fade, but intensified, generating demands for an independent Khalistan, and armed conflict with the centre.

In this process, as caste identities declined, confessional antagonisms sharpened, each side seeking to unify its community with religious appeals. Sikh Untouchables, once supporters of Congress, assassinated Indira Gandhi; Hindu Untouchables led the pogroms of revenge. Yet viewed historically, the communalism unleashed by secularisation was a disease of growth, which would pass as it went deeper. Indian parliamentarism had begun in deference to pious tradition and custom, but in persisting was gradually becoming a popular attachment of principle. The objectively Hindu character of the Indian state remained, but democracy had more and more taken root in it.

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Something like the opposite configuration, Furman argued, could be seen in the relation between religion and politics in Israel. Formally speaking, the state proclaimed the principles that defined any democratic government, upholding freedom of conscience and banning religious discrimination. Yet in practice it defied these norms with a mass of religious rules imposed on believers and non-believers alike, submitting daily life to the precepts of a rigorist Judaism. Work, transport and public services were restricted on the Sabbath; business, food, even archaeology were subject

to other taboos. Most flagrant of all was a ban on civil marriage, and a prohibition of any wedding in which one partner was not of Jewish faith. Only Orthodox rabbis had legal status, and it was they who had laid down the definition of a Jew. Any Jew abandoning Judaism for another faith could not apply for Israeli citizenship. All this looked more like Saudi Arabia or Iran than any Western state. Yet the clericalism of the state was at variance with the secularism of society: as many Jews never set foot in a synagogue as visited one weekly. How could an Orthodox minority, amounting to little more than a quarter of the community, have such disproportionate weight?

The conventional answer was that the Israeli system of proportional representation made religious parties essential to the formation of most governments. 'Our hands were tied,' Ben-Gurion would say in justification of Labor's role in creating a confessional state. But why did he accept clerical 'blackmail', if it could have been avoided by alliance with parties to the left of Labor? In reality, Mapai's embrace of clerical parties was a question of principle – a government without them, said Ben-Gurion's colleague and successor Sharett, was unthinkable; national unity was at stake in their inclusion, declared Peres. Behind this stance lay more than mere party calculation. Polls regularly showed there was wide acceptance among non-religious Jews of the degree of clerical control of Israeli life. National unity, conceived as the in-gathering of Jews in Israel, was the highest value for parties across the spectrum, in a context where perception of external threats created a permanent sense of crisis overshadowing all other questions, reducing clericalism to a side issue for the majority of the population. Yet this hardly explained why its acceptance could be felt a matter of principle. Even invocations of the need for unity were less than convincing, given that the powers conceded to Orthodox Jews meant a standing rebuff to Reform Jews, a majority of the community in the US.

The true reason clericalism retained such a grip in Israel lay elsewhere, in the nature of Judaism itself. An ethnic religion, it was the only bond connecting the dispersed groups of Jews in Russia, Germany, Eastern Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, who otherwise had virtually nothing in common. Secularisation was therefore a threat to Jewish identity in a way unlike that for any ordinary nation. Zionist nationalism was hostile to the passive ghetto outlook of Orthodox Judaism, yet fear of assimiliation meant it could never mount its drive for Palestine without the Orthodox. Nor, after it created the state of Israel, could Zionism resolve intractable issues like the definition of

a Jew without delegating these to the Orthodox, keeping its hands ostensibly clean by shifting the responsibility for religious discrimination to rabbinical authority, in a division of labour allowing its leaders to grace the Second International. The reality was that Zionist objectives and democratic principles were in contradiction from the start, since the Zionist programme could only be implemented by ignoring the will of the Arab majority in Palestine, and driving it out of its lands. Israel was built on an exclusionary structure like that of South Africa, or the American South of old. External threats were functional to the maintenance of this structure, and the masking of its inner crisis. Sooner or later – Furman was writing this a quarter of a century ago – Israelis would have to choose between consequent democracy and consequent Zionism. The two could not be reconciled.

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Furman came to Islam chronologically last, in a style symmetrical with his first study on Confucianism, setting out a systematic comparison of it with Christianity in an afterword to*Towards an Islamic Reformation*, by the Sudanese thinker Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im. The foundational difference between Christian and Muslim beliefs lay in the contrast between Jesus and Muhammad as bearers of a new religion. For early believers, the content of Jesus's teaching was secondary to the message of his death and resurrection as a divinity, in a highly organised Roman Empire to whose authority he taught obedience. Muhammad, on the other hand, was a human prophet who created a new set of laws and inspired a warrior following to unify a hitherto formless Arabian Peninsula. Not belief in a Son of God, but in a text left by a man who founded a state, defined the faithful. If the Quran fell into two parts, verses from Mecca not that different from tenets of Christianity or Judaism, and verses from Medina more sharply demarcated from them, laying down detailed laws for a proto-Arab state and calling for war on unbelievers, tradition came to hold that where they diverged, the second superseded the first.

So when the inevitable time of formalisation came for Christianity, what was subjected to dogmatic discipline were theological doctrine, organisation and ritual, not the sphere of government, which it left unregulated. In Islam, by contrast, formalisation occurred not in a setting of recent persecution, but of victorious power, based on written instructions for its government. Early Christianity split over quarrels about the Trinity, early Islam over conflicts about who should be caliph. Muhammad died before

the Arab conquests of the Middle East and North Africa, which required settlement of many questions with which he had never been confronted, for which scholars in due course developed a body of rules in the sharia. But the status of these religious professionals was more modest than that of the clergy in Christianity, the status of government more sacred. Here not the church but the state was the vector of dogmatisation: the first religious dispute, dividing future Shia from future Sunni, was a civil war over succession to the caliphate.

If medieval Islam were to be compared with medieval Christendom, it is clear that the world governed by the sharia was rather closer to norms of contemporary Western life. Muslim societies were more egalitarian: there was less religious persecution, oppression of the lower classes was often milder, the position of women better, and the cultural level higher. But with the advent of Renaissance and Reformation there was a reversal: in Europe, a dynamic development of spheres of life relatively unregulated by religion – technology, market, law, government – weakened the formalisation of belief itself, while in the Muslim world all social forms and changes had still to be judged by a timeless model of government codified by the sharia, departures from which could be stigmatised as *bida* – heresy. Whereas in the West, centralised religious authority made alteration possible even in matters of dogma, allowing for developments like scholasticism, the informal consensus of the *ulema* led to fear of innovation.

Not that in due course Islam failed to produce movements of reformation, calling as in Christianity for a return to the pristine purity of the scriptures. Certainly, there was no such dramatic contrast between the life of the founder and the worldly degeneration of the Renaissance papacy – the caliphs might be slack or corrupt as rulers, but Muhammad himself had after all enjoyed 11 wives. Yet movements of religious reform were actually easier psychologically in Islam than in Christianity, since there was no massive church to fight against, and a ready-made model of government was to hand to which the pure could revert. For the same reasons, they were less consequential, since they opened no path to a freer thought or society. Between Lutheranism and Wahhabism the distance was wide.

When the balance of political forces changed all too visibly in favour of the West, the first reaction in the Islamic world was to acquire the weapons needed to resist it, with reforms of the army in Turkey, Egypt and Iran (as earlier in Russia). Then came engineering and technology, railways and training institutions. Finally, ideas too began

to penetrate – the first constitution arriving in the Ottoman realms in 1876, the first republic in Azerbaijan in 1918. But still today, the mass of believers remains attached to the sharia, even if they do not live by it. If movements of social protest once again call for a return to it, cultural protests in its name against Americanisation have now joined them. Out of their fusion arose contemporary Islamic fundamentalism. Yet at the same time, the advance of secularisation was plain to see in mores everywhere, not least in Khomeinist Iran.

Between the two forces of fundamentalism and secularism, there was an impasse. Proposals like those of Ahmed An-Na'im and Mohammed Taha to trump the Medinan portions of the Quran, as conditioned by the circumstances of their period, with the timeless principles of the Meccan portions presented as fully compatible with contemporary democratic norms, sought to break this deadlock with something like the same operation as the Reformers of 16th-century Europe. They were a sign among others that it was wrong to exaggerate the problems of the Muslim world. Some of these were, of course, specific to it, but the road to modern democracies in Europe itself was strewn with convulsions – Nazism in Germany, fascism in Italy and Spain – as extreme as anything to be seen in the Arab world. There were no grounds for Western pharisaism in the Middle East.

What, finally, of religion in Russia itself? In the tenth century, the legend went, four envoys arrived in Kiev to persuade its pagan prince of the merits of their faith – a Jewish emissary from the Khazar empire, a Muslim from the Bulgar Khanate, a Catholic from Rome, a Greek Orthodox from Byzantium. In choosing the last, Vladimir brought Russia its form of Christianity. The story, Furman noted, was half-myth, half-literary artefact. But it expressed a historical reality. Religions, once adopted, were exceptionally durable. Ottoman rule did not make Serbs, Greeks or Armenians Muslim, nor did European colonisation make Indians, Burmese or most Indonesians Christian. Whatever the reasons for the decision in Kiev, perhaps quite contingent, its consequences lasted for nearly a thousand years. Critical was the option for the Eastern rather than the Western branch of Christianity. For by that time the structure of each differed fundamentally. The Eastern was decentralised, consisting of a number of churches whose patriarchs were jealous of their standing, but all subject to the imperial state in Byzantium, whereas the Western was centralised under the authority of the bishop of Rome, and faced a plurality of states, but was subject to none of them. In

these conditions, the former became politically pliable but doctrinally rigid – the efforts required to reach agreement between the different churches being so exhausting that the decisions of the first seven Ecumenical Councils became final, permitting no further alteration – while in the latter, theological innovation was at papal discretion. Such intellectual change was blocked in the East.

By the early Middle Ages, moreover, the Catholic Church covered a much larger geographical and cultured space than Orthodox Christianity, and communicated across it in Latin. Russian Orthodoxy, on the other hand, resisted even the use of Greek, the language of its scriptures and liturgy remaining Church Slavonic. Cultural isolation reinforced ideological closure. No counterpart to the universities or the scholastic thought of the West, no interest in scientific knowledge or education, ever emerged. Eventually, after the fall of Byzantium, Muscovy – contemptuous of attempts at last-minute compromise with Rome by the Greek clergy to stave off conquest by the Ottomans – became the only Orthodox state left in the world. The outcome was a Russian Church that gave unquestioning support to Russian autocracy, so long as its theology was left untouched. Tsars could any commit any crimes or atrocities – see Ivan IV – without the slightest rebuke, but if the holy books were updated, virtual civil war broke out. In the 17th century the Old Believers who rebelled against the impious patriarch that did so were marginalised, and when in the 18th century Peter I, totally uninterested in religious quarrels and scruples, made the church into a straightforward department of the state, there was no resistance. Catherine II could even appoint Voltaireans to the synod in charge of it.

By the 19th century, the result was a Russian Orthodoxy that dominated popular imagination and tradition, but played virtually no part in the spiritual life of most of the intelligentsia. What the church's combination of a formal monopoly of belief and an actual weakness in society came to encourage was the spread of disbelief. For Old Believers, a blessing with three fingers rather than two might be blasphemy, but for non-believers neither gesture meant anything. Complete rejection of religion had become easier and more normal than the smallest change in the sphere of belief. Voltaire or Marx could be published when a Russian translation of the Bible was banned. In no other country in Europe was religion so unalterable, yet so extrinsic to the real life of the community, the prestige of the church so low that the sons of a priest could want to conceal their father's occupation out of shame for it. So it was that

nowhere else lay buried such potential for mass atheism. The Revolution of 1917 drew the balance sheet of nine hundred years of Russian Orthodoxy. The moral of this history, Furman thought, spoke for itself. 1989 was just a few months away.

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The advent of perestroika in 1986 came as a pleasant surprise to Furman. In the remote future, he had always expected a path to democracy in the Soviet Union, if one that might have to pass through a phase of right-wing reaction in a 'flabby fascism', so he was delighted that the country looked as if it would be spared that, and could move towards an orderly liberalisation more proximately and painlessly than he had ever thought possible. The political changes of the time did not deflect him from the comparative study of religion – his writing on Hinduism, Judaism and Orthodoxy dates from 1988-89 – but he now brought the conceptual tools he had developed for its study to bear on them. At stake was the role of the CPSU and its ideology in the future of Russia. Marxism was a scientific theory, subject to empirical controls like any other, that had become the object of a faith for which people died and killed on a scale comparable to Christianity or Islam. From the start, it had a religious dimension, since the titanic scientific work of Marx was accomplished not just for the sake of knowing the truth, but also of finding the ultimate meaning of life and history that religion had obscured. In their combination of prophetic passion and encyclopedic ambition, Marx and Engels were by nature – like the founders of every major religion – non-conformists. But as with every other innovative system of belief, in the next generation creative inspiration was followed by dogmatisation.

In the West, this was relatively mild and rapidly eroded. In Russia, however, the misery of the masses, the tyranny of the autocracy, the spiritual vacuum left by Orthodoxy, intensified dogmatisation to the utmost, transmuting revolutionary eschatology into iron party discipline, the evolution from early Marxism to Stalin resembling that of primitive Christianity to Ivan IV. If the process was much faster, the reason lay in the speed at which the beliefs of a small minority became those of a whole people. Revolutionary Marxism answered to the thoughts and aspirations of masses who had lost faith in divine justice and resurrection, who hated their oppressors and dreamed of heaven on earth. Their new beliefs gave them the strength to achieve the unthinkable, and inflict the unbearable. It was Platonov who understood them: these

were the villagers of *Chevengur*. The sacralisation of Lenin sprang spontaneously from that soil, on which Stalin could readily erect his own cult.

But unlike Christianity, Islam or Buddhism, which lasted for centuries, this religion was over very quickly – because it was never just a religion. Marxism as a science exploded Marxism as a faith: subjectively, once its predictions of communism did not come to pass, and the two available defence mechanisms of 'deferment' or 'paradise has arrived' wore thin, and objectively, as the huge social changes it wrought – urbanisation, education, industrialisation – transformed Russia, superseding the semi-literate fanatics of Platonov's bitter heroism. Martyrs and executioners were no longer needed. Bureaucrats and careerists took over. Institutionalised, Marxist ideology became a hardened shell around an inner vacuum, into which a traditional great power chauvinism seeped under Stalin. Krushchev tried to revive it with reforms in the name of Lenin, but the impulse was weak, and soon exhausted. After 1968, its degeneration was complete. Perestroika was an attempt to take up the line of reform interrupted in the 1960s once again, in something like the spirit of a Leninist version of the Second Vatican Council. But it faced great difficulties and dangers.

There was an urgent need, Furman argued, to clean out the Augean stables of this dogmatised ideology, but now little interest in doing so: it was easier to cast it out as nonsense. But Marxism was not just a set of outdated answers to sundry problems – it remained a set of questions that in some sense were immanent to contemporary humanity. Just as ideas deriving from Christianity retain their meaning independently of their mythological formulation (no Adam and Eve, but certainly imperfection of human nature), so the deep need of contemporary human beings to explore the logic and stadiality of world-historical processes – where we came from; where we are going – persists, regardless of a bygone canonisation of the 'five modes of production'. So too socialisation of the means of production might not have led to anything good, and Russians now dreamed only of importing capitalism. But human beings cannot cease to strive for a social order in which they are no longer subject to the inhuman necessities of a society investing them as if it were a second nature, nor seek to relate that effort to an understanding of the logic of world history.

Politically, even, there was reason not simply to discard, but to analyse the dogmas of the Soviet system, and to extract their rational kernel, on pain of repeating what they represented – not in a return to Stalinism, but in the adoption of antithetical ideologies

born of an inability to bear the disarray that freedom from it might bring. As the role of Protestantism in Christianity had shown, for the steady progress of a society a faith reformed was better than a faith destroyed. Ideologies could play different roles at different stages in their history. In the epoch of John Paul II it was easy to forget that in the time of its total power, Roman Christianity was the religion of the Inquisition and the ethnic cleansing of the Jews and Moors from Spain. Likewise in Russia, what had been the ideology of the gulag could also become an instrument of democratisation, whose revival might be the only way of ensuring there would be no new gulags. But for it to have life again, it would have to undergo root-and-branch critique.

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The essay in which these reflections appeared in 1989, 'Stalin and Ourselves from a Religious Point of View', was Furman's first political intervention. Till then he had welcomed perestroika, but without any active participation in public life. A sense of guilt at his quietism had now impelled him into it. But he remained the bookish humanist he had been, whose passivity was also a certain disconnection from the political realities around him. As he later observed, after having always been least concerned with it, 'I began giving some credit to Marxism when everybody had already stopped doing it.' The change was prompted by the hopes aroused by Gorbachev. But as he noted in the same retrospect, perestroika – 'a belated Soviet version of the Prague Spring' – had arrived too late. The prospect of an evolutionary democratisation of the USSR through a Marxist reform 'required some minimum amount of people capable of embracing these ideas literally, rather than as a cover or an outward form. There were plenty of such people in the 1960s; in the 1980s there were none.' Among his contemporaries, those who had once – devotees or dalliers – conformed with scientific socialism were plunging into orgies of admiration for capitalism. This was not a spectacle to encourage him to abandon his life-plan of work in the field of comparative religion. He was writing grammatical comments on the Sanskrit of his handwritten copy of the *Bhagavad Gita* when perestroika collapsed in the coup of 1991.

After a convivial evening at Furman's place, where he stayed the night, Alexei Pankin was woken up by his friend on the morning of 19 August with the words 'They've taken Gorbachev,' and before Pankin had quite grasped what had happened, Furman told

him that it was all over: whoever won, democracy was already lost. Whether the victors were the State Committee on the State of Emergency or Yeltsin and his followers, they would crush opposition and cling to power at all costs. It was a turning point for Furman. From now on, out of a sense of civic duty, he moved – with an effort of will – from comparative religion to contemporary politics. Over the next twenty years, he would write prolifically on the political scene in Russia. A selection of his articles, published in two books separated by a decade, covers a thousand pages. These were 'analyses on the run', as he called them, with all the pitfalls of ephemeral commentary on current affairs to be found in the journalism of Marx and Engels or Pareto, as distinct from their theoretical work. Such interventions should be dispassionate, objective and long-range in vision. But that was difficult, he observed, when the fate of your country, of yourself and your friends, was at stake.

In the Yeltsin era, he later confessed, Furman was sickened by the new rulers of the country. For Yeltsin himself, whom he viewed as morally and intellectually a pathological figure, he felt only fear and repulsion; and for the intelligentsia that idolised him – his own layer – disgust at their opportunism. They had turned on Gorbachev, who had freed them, 'like dogs sitting in a cage and whining till they were let out by someone they immediately attacked'. Most had been party members, and this was their revolution. 'At last the time is right for our generation' – the 40-year-olds – an acquaintance told him, and it was true. In Russia, unlike in Eastern Europe, youth played no active part in the overthrow of the USSR or what followed: student presence was conspicuously missing. All these were private opinions that he expressed long afterwards. At the time his public interventions were incisive enough, but their tone was typically calm and reflective: *ad rem*, not *ad hominem*. With them, he came to occupy a strange position in the Russia media: very few agreed with him, but none cared to tangle with him. Isolated in an apprehensive respect, his views were a consistent affront to the consensus of the period.

The verdict that Furman immediately delivered on the overturn of August 1991 established the key for what was to come: 'The victory of the democrats is the defeat of democracy.' The way Yeltsin and his followers took power ensured that an authoritarian regime lay ahead. A minority coup had once again been pulled off, which as in 1917 would compel its authors to batten down the hatches to cling to their power, while promising a brighter future to the masses. Russian liberalism had no popular

appeal, but Russian nationalism did, and Yeltsin had used it without scruple against Gorbachev to lever his way to the Kremlin. How little he and his group cared about the means of cementing their power was promptly displayed by the deal in the Belovezhskaya forest that dissolved the USSR without even a pretence of popular consultation in Russia, where it would undoubtedly have been rejected. When they met opposition in the elected legislature, these were democrats who did not hesitate – as the putschists of 1991 had – to shed blood to crush it, shelling the parliament with tanks and causing many more deaths than publicly admitted; nor to fake the results of the referendum with which they then rammed through a constitution for the presidential autocrat. Like their predecessors, these were people who believed that it was permissible to suppress democracy now to build a better democracy in the future.

The ideology they adopted in its name was no more than a crude inversion of the historical materialism they denounced, accepting the communist image of the West and reversing its value-signs. Private property and the market were the fount of all that is good. The basis of democracy could only be a class of property owners, so if a bourgeois stratum could be yanked into being by handing the nation's assets to a vulpine minority, a path would be cleared to ultimate freedom and riches for all. In this world turned upside down, Stolypin was romanticised as a hero of the capitalist path to democracy, while the Mensheviks subverted democracy by struggling against capitalism, and Pinochet was a better architect of liberty than Allende. In no other post-communist society did 'intellectual capitalism' gain such sway than in the country least culturally and psychologically prepared for a capitalist market.

In reality, Furman observed, capitalism succeeded only where pre-capitalist traditions were woven into it: the Protestant conscience in Anglo-America, feudal conceptions of loyalty and duty in Japan, Confucian morality in Taiwan or China. In Russia, the comparable resources would have been the peasant-to-socialist sense of the dignity of labour, and the prestige of a high level of science and education fostered in the USSR. But these were utterly squandered by a regime dominated by intellectuals who had jettisoned the best legacies of Marxism, and bureaucrats who rejected any reformation of it as a return to early Bolshevik asceticism, preferring instead to wallow in their own enrichment. So not hard work or enterprise, but fraud and theft were given ideological sanction, confirming popular caricatures of capitalism and bourgeois democracy from Soviet days. The result was a thoroughly criminalised capitalism, whose mafia gangs,

mass disillusionment and anti-democratic sentiment were likely to outlast the regime itself. This was the third time in our history, Furman told his compatriots, that we thought by grasping what we took to be the 'key' to Western success, to make a radical break with the past, only to preserve its worst features. Each time we got it wrong. The market was just one aspect, not the foundation, of a modern society, which required a rule of law inseparable from democracy, and wealth created by labour that was honest and creative. The dictum of a *perestroichik* had got it right: 'As we work, so shall we live.'

The unfolding of Yeltsin's rule corresponded to Furman's predictions of it. Yet looking back, he could say that towards the end of the decade he felt less fear than relief, since the worst – a violent disintegration like that of Yugoslavia – had been avoided. Nationalist reaction to the dissolution of the USSR and an imperialist transformation of the ruling elite had proved weaker than might have been imagined. In fearing these, he had underestimated two factors: the dependence of the upper layer of the regime on the West, and the reflex obedience of the Russian masses to power. Both were at work in Yeltsin's fraudulent re-election in 1996, applauded in the West, but also accepted by ordinary people, despite acute social discontent and widespread dislike of him. Paradoxically, popular nostalgia for the stability of late Soviet society actually helped Yeltsin, who destroyed it. For the masses, there was already chaos enough in the Russia of the 1990s: fear of a change of power proved greater than anger against power. A strongman, however discredited, was preferable to the risk of not having one. Contrary to much opinion, and to his own wishes, Furman never doubted Yeltsin would stay put in the Kremlin.

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Was all this inevitable? In thinking about it, Furman developed a notion at which his reflections on Vladimir's choice of Orthodoxy in Kiev had hinted. There were certain moments in history when a fan of possibilities opened, allowing for quite different outcomes. These were infrequent and often brief conjunctures, before the fan clacked shut. The advent of Gorbachev had been one of them. The USSR could have continued in decline for twenty years, or undergone a sudden implosion and swing to the right of the kind Furman had sometimes envisaged. The course taken by Gorbachev was the least probable of scenarios, a happy gift of history that was 'a kind of winning of the lottery'. How had such a figure ever risen to the top in the CPSU of Brezhnev's time?

The answer certainly lay in part in his provincial background. He arrived in the corrupt and worldly capital of Moscow very late, only in 1978, retaining the freshness and naivety of his origins. There his simplicity and sincerity must have helped him, because they were so rare at the time – unthinkable in the Muscovite intelligentsia but appreciated by cynical party elders, reminding them of their youth and perhaps hinting that they had, after all, been serving a great cause. What they could not have realised – no one could – was his courage, and the boldness of his ambition, once power passed to him by biological default. The ambition was a Marxist Reformation to liberate Soviet society from its bureaucratic incarceration. Gorbachev was not the first ruler in Russia who sought to use his power for the benefit of the country and its people. His greatness lay in his willingness to restrict it for their benefit, and run the risk of losing it rather than renounce his principles. In that he was historically unique. He was a communist who voluntarily – under no compulsion – lessened his own power, preferring compromise to dictation.

His simple-mindedness did not leave him when he occupied the Kremlin, and was always a limitation. He had no real plan for perestroika, only a series of images of what he would like to see or do. He was a poor judge of people, far too trusting of others, most of whom would betray him. To boot, he developed two reference groups that could only damage his enterprise. The first was the intelligentsia, whom – out of a great respect for culture and awareness of the modesty of his own – Gorbachev overvalued, but who least of all had any time for his socialist ideals. The second was the West, whose enthusiasm for him diverted his attention from problems at home, and whose advice he took too seriously. Both eroded his confidence in the goals for which he set out. By the end, as his faith in them dwindled, Thatcher had stronger convictions than he did.

Most critical of all, perhaps, was his overestimation of the ‘good sense’ of everyone, including the Russian people. He said the most important thing in politics was to be ‘measured’, but he continually took the presence of that quality in others too much for granted. He could not bring himself to see that a people just released from totalitarian confinement could not be expected to act in normal, sensible ways. Within a couple of years, they had been given as much freedom as they could handle. They were not ready for more, but Gorbachev pressed on. For as a ruler he retained a Leninist faith in the creativity of the masses, and a Leninist haste in his actions. History had delayed too

long in producing Gorbachev, but he then rushed too quickly, accelerating the dynamic he set in motion even as it needed braking. When the crisis of 1988-89 came, he still sought to solve it by talks and negotiations, trying to reason with opponents who saw mere weakness in his approaches. To rely on the good sense of all concerned was to clutch at a straw. At that point magnanimity became self-deception. Had he acted firmly against those bent on overthrowing him, he would have preserved the support of the people, and could have avoided the debacle of 1991, when if it had been Gorbachev who declared an exceptional situation, Furman would have supported him. Yet the dignity with which he bore his fall was a mark of the same character. In the end, his failure was not personal: the social forces needed to carry through perestroika no longer existed.

[1] *Relating Religion* (2004), *Divine Drudgery* (1990), *On Teaching Religion* (2013).

[2] See, inter alia, Talal Asad's *Genealogies of Religion* (1993), Russell McCutcheon's*Manufacturing Religion* (1997), Richard King's *Orientalism and Religion* (1999), Daniel Dubuisson's *The Western Construction of Religion* (2003). For temperate versions: Lionel Jensen's *Manufacturing Confucianism* (1997) – shorn of this element, an impressive work of philological scholarship – and Sharada Sugirtharajah's *Imagining Hinduism* (2003).

[3] For the Anglican variant, David Martin, *On Secularisation* (2005); for the Catholic, José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (1994).

[4] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (2007); Ronald Dworkin, *Religion without God* (2013).

[5] Religion properly construed, of course, not 'fundamentalism'. For Rawls, see *Political Liberalism*; for Habermas, 'Secularism's Crisis of Faith: Notes on Post-Secular Society', *New Perspectives Quarterly*, Fall 2008, and the round-up of ensuing discussion – 'Habermas's view of religion's potential as a remedial cultural resource for contemporary social ills is shared by many religous leaders' – in Philip Gorski et al, *The Post-Secular in Question* (2012), complete with a chapter on '"Simple Ideas, Small Miracles": The Obama Phenomenon'.

[6] See Robert Bellah, *Religion in Human Evolution* (2011), where the great Axial breakthroughs to higher forms of piety are presented side by side, with no attempt at comparison between them. Bellah was a troubled Episcopalian.

[7] This is the burden of David Martin's first venture into the field: *A General Theory of Secularisation* (1978). For the political tenor of this body of writing: 'If you want an example of genuinely Christian heartwork you can find it in the occasion when Bill Clinton repented in tears before a large company, including his wife, and was tearfully forgiven' – 'When Prime Minister Blair said he would face his Maker over his decision to send soldiers to kill and be killed in Iraq, he showed something of the specific gravity resting on those bearing political responsibility' – 'Luther King also had sight of the Promised Land of full citizenship according to the promise of the American covenant before his exemplary death; and Obama entered into that inheritance, like a veritable Joshua': *On Secularisation* (2005), *Religion and Power* (2014).

[8] See Steve Bruce, *Secularisation* (2011).

[9] See Derluguian's fine introduction to the selection of Furman's writings on comparative religion – the indispensable starting point for reflection on their author – which he edited in 2011.

[10] Since the attack on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon, a short-winded literature has proliferated on the contemporary role of assorted faiths in politics, in collections like *God's Rule: The Politics of World Religions*, whose rabbinical editor, Jacob Neusner, boasts more than 900 books published under his name. Its introducer explains that 'in a particular and wonderful way, this is a profoundly American exercise'. Output of this kind adds little to the subject.

Russia's Managed Democracy

Perry Anderson

Under lowering skies, a thin line of mourners stretched silently outside the funeral hall. Barring the entrance, hulking riot police kept them waiting until assorted dignitaries – Anatoly Chubais, Nato envoys, an impotent ombudsman – had paid their respects. Eventually they were let in to view the corpse of the murdered woman, her forehead wrapped in the white ribbon of the Orthodox rite, her body, slight enough anyway, diminished by the flower-encrusted bier. Around the edges of the mortuary chamber, garlands from the media that attacked her while she was alive stood thick alongside wreaths from her children and friends, the satisfied leaf to leaf with the

bereaved. Filing past them and out into the cemetery beyond, virtually no one spoke. Some were in tears. People dispersed in the drizzle as quietly as they came.

The authorities had gone to some lengths to divert Anna Politkovskaya's funeral from the obvious venue of the Vagankovskoe, where Sakharov is buried, to a dreary precinct on the outskirts that few Muscovites can locate on a map. But how necessary was the precaution? The number of mourners who got to the Troekurovskoe was not large, perhaps a thousand or so, and the mood of the occasion was more sadness than anger. A middle-aged woman, bringing groceries home from the supermarket, shot at point-blank range in an elevator, Politkovskaya was killed for her courage in reporting the continuing butchery in Chechnya. An attempt to poison her had narrowly failed two years earlier. She had another article in press on the atrocities of the Kadyrov clan that now runs the country for the Kremlin, as she was eliminated. She lived and died a fighter. But of any powerful protest at her death, it is difficult to speak. She was buried with resignation, not fury or revolt.

In Ukraine, the discovery of the decapitated body of a journalist who had investigated official corruption, Georgi Gongadze, was sufficient outrage to shake the regime, which was brought down soon afterwards. Politkovskaya was a figure of another magnitude. A better historical comparison might be with the murder of Matteotti by Mussolini in 1924. In Russian circumstances, her moral stature as an opponent of arbitrary power was scarcely less than that of the Socialist deputy. But there the resemblance ends. The Matteotti Affair caused an outcry that nearly toppled Mussolini. Politkovskaya was killed with scarcely a ripple in public opinion. Her death, the official media explained, was either an unfathomable mystery, or the work of enemies of the government vainly attempting to discredit it. The president remarked she was a nobody whose death was the only news value in her life.

It is tempting, but would be a mistake, to see in that casual dismissal no more than the ordinary arrogance of power. All governments deny their crimes, and most are understanding of each other's lies about them. Bush and Blair, with still more blood on their hands – in all probability, that of over half a million Iraqis – observe these precepts as automatically as Putin. But there is a difference that sets Putin apart from his fellow rulers in the G8, indeed from virtually any government in the world. On the evidence of comparative opinion polls, he is the most popular national leader alive today. Since he came to power six years ago, he has enjoyed the continuous support of

over 70 per cent of his people, a record no other contemporary politician begins to approach. For comparison, Chirac now has an approval rating of 38 per cent, Bush of 36 per cent, Blair of 30 per cent.

Such eminence may seem perverse, but it is not unintelligible. Putin's authority derives, in the first place, from the contrast with the ruler who made him. From a Western standpoint, Yeltsin's regime was by no means a failure. By ramming through a more sweeping privatisation of industry than any carried out in Eastern Europe, and maintaining a façade of competitive elections, it laid the foundations of a Russian capitalism for the new century. However sodden or buffoonish Yeltsin's personal conduct, these were solid achievements that secured him unstinting support from the United States, where Clinton, stewing in indignities of his own, was the appropriate leader for mentoring him. As Strobe Talbott characteristically put it, 'Clinton and Yeltsin bonded. Big time.' In the eyes of most Russians, on the other hand, Yeltsin's administration set loose a wave of corruption and criminality; stumbled chaotically from one political crisis to another; presided over an unprecedented decline in living standards and collapse of life expectancy; humiliated the country by obeisance to foreign powers; destroyed the currency and ended in bankruptcy. By 1998, according to official statistics, GDP had fallen over a decade by some 45 per cent; the mortality rate had increased by 50 per cent; government revenues had nearly halved; the crime rate had doubled. It is no surprise that as this misrule drew to a close, Yeltsin's support among the population was in single figures.

Against this background, any new administration would have been hard put not to do better. Putin, however, had the good luck to arrive in power just as oil prices took off. With export earnings from the energy sector suddenly soaring, economic recovery was rapid and continuous. Since 1999, GDP has grown by 6-7 per cent a year. The budget is now in surplus, with a stabilisation fund of some $80 billion set aside for any downturn in oil prices, and the rouble is convertible. Capitalisation of the stock market stands at 80 per cent of GDP. Foreign debt has been paid down. Reserves top $250 billion. In short, the country has been the largest single beneficiary of the world commodities boom of the early 21st century. For ordinary Russians, this has brought a tangible improvement in living standards. Though average real wages remain very low, less than $400 dollars a month, they have doubled under Putin (personal incomes are nearly two times higher because remuneration is often paid in non-wage form, to avoid

some taxes). That increase is the most important basis of his support. To relative prosperity, Putin has added stability. Cabinet convulsions, confrontations with the legislature, lapses into presidential stupor, are things of the past. Administration may not be that much more efficient, but order – at least north of the Caucasus – has been restored. Last but not least, the country is no longer 'under external management', as the pointed local phrase puts it. The days when the IMF dictated budgets, and the Foreign Ministry acted as little more than an American consulate, are over. Gone are the campaign managers for re-election of the president, jetting in from California. Freed from foreign debt and diplomatic supervision, Russia is an independent state once again.

Prosperity, stability, sovereignty: the national consensus around Putin rests on his satisfaction of these primordial concerns. That there may be less in each than meets the eye matters little, politically speaking, so long as their measure is memories of the abyss under Yeltsin. By that standard the material progress, however relative, is real. But the stratospheric polls reflect something else as well – an image of the ruler. Putin cuts a somewhat colourless, frigid figure in the West. In cultures accustomed to more effusive styles of leadership, the sleek, stoat-shaped head and stone-cold eyes offer little purchase for affective projection. In Russia, however, charisma wears another face. When he came to power, Putin lacked any trace of it. But possession of the presidency has altered him. For Weber, who had the Hebrew prophets in mind, charisma was by definition extra-institutional – it was a kind of magic that could only be personal. He could not foresee postmodern conditions, in which the spectacle is a higher power, capable of dissolving the boundaries between the two.

Once installed in the presidency, Putin has cultivated two attributes that have given him an aura capable of outlasting it. The first is the image of firm, where necessary ruthless authority. Historically, the brutal imposition of order has been more often admired than feared in Russia. Rather than his portrait suffering from the shadow of the KGB, Putin has converted it into a halo of austere discipline. In what remains in many ways a macho society, toughness – prowess in judo and drops into criminal slang are part of Putin's kit – continues to be valued, and not only by men: polls report that Putin's most enthusiastic fans are often women. But there is another, less obvious side to his charisma. Part of his chilly magnetism is cultural. He is widely admired for his command of the language. Here, too, contrast is everything. Lenin was the last ruler of

the country who could speak an educated Russian. Stalin's Georgian accent was so thick he rarely risked speaking in public. Khrushchev's vocabulary was crude and his grammar barbaric. Brezhnev could scarcely put two sentences together. Gorbachev spoke with a provincial southern accent. The less said of Yeltsin's slurred diction the better. To hear a leader of the country capable once again of expressing himself with clarity, accuracy and fluency, in a more or less correct idiom, comes as music to many Russians.

In a strange way Putin's prestige is thus also intellectual. For all his occasional crudities, at least in his mouth the national tongue is no longer obviously humiliated. This is not just a matter of cases and tenses, or pronunciation. Putin has developed into what by today's undemanding standards is an articulate politician, who can field questions from viewers on television for hours as confidently and lucidly as he lectures journalists in interviews, or addresses partners at summit meetings, where he has excelled at sardonic repartee. The intelligence is limited and cynical, above the level of his Anglo-American counterparts, but without much greater ambition. It has been enough, however, to give Putin half of his brittle lustre in Russia. There, an apparent union of fist and mind has captured the popular imaginary.

The combination of an oil and gas bonanza with a persona of clear-headed power has been enough to demarcate Putin, in public opinion, decisively from what came before and to assure him mastery of the political scene. The actual regime over which he presides, however, although it has involved important changes, shows less of a break with Yeltsin's time than might appear. The economy that Yeltsin left behind was in the grip of a tiny group of profiteers, who had seized the country's major assets in a racket – so-called loans for shares – devised by one of its beneficiaries, Vladimir Potanin, and imposed by Chubais, operating as the neo-liberal Rasputin at Yeltsin's court. The president and his extended 'Family' (relatives, aides, hangers-on) naturally took their own share of the loot. It is doubtful whether the upshot had any equivalent in the entire history of capitalism. The leading seven oligarchs to emerge from these years – Berezovsky, Gusinsky, Potanin, Abramovich, Fridman, Khodorkovsky, Aven – ended up controlling a vast slice of national wealth, most of the media and much of the Duma. Putin was picked by the Family to ensure these arrangements did not come under scrutiny afterwards. His first act in office was to grant Yeltsin immunity from

prosecution, and he has generally looked after his immediate entourage. (Chubais got Russia's electricity grid as a parting gift.)

But if he wanted a stronger government than Yeltsin's, he could not afford to leave the oligarchs in undisturbed possession of their powers. After warning them that they could keep their riches only if they stayed out of politics, he moved to curb them. The three most ambitious magnates – Gusinsky, Berezovsky and Khodorkovsky – were broken: two fleeing into exile, the third dispatched to a labour camp. A fourth, Abramovich, though still persona grata in the Kremlin, has opted for residence abroad. Putin has taken back under state control parts of the oil industry, and created out of the country's gas monopoly a giant conglomerate with a current market capitalisation of $200 billion. The public sector's share of GDP has risen only modestly, by about 5 per cent. But for the time being, the booty capitalism of the 1990s has come to a halt. In regaining control of some stretches of the commanding heights of the economy, the state has strengthened its leverage. The balance of power has shifted away from extraordinary accumulations of private plunder towards more traditional forms of bureaucratic management.

These changes are a focus of some anxiety in the Western business press, where fears are often expressed of an ominous statism that threatens the liberalisation of the 1990s. In reality, markets are in no danger. The Russian state has been strengthened as an economic agent, but not with any socialising intent, simply as a quarry of political power. In other respects, Putin has taken the same underlying programme as his predecessor several steps further. Land has finally been privatised, a threshold Yeltsin's regime was unable to cross. Moscow boasts more billionaires than New York, yet a flat income tax of 13 per cent has been introduced, at Yegor Gaidar's urging. A highly regressive 'unified social tax' falls on those who can least afford it. Welfare benefits have been monetised and slashed. Key economic ministries remain in the hands of committed marketeers. Neo-liberalism is safe enough in Russia today. The president has made this clear to all who are interested. On a visit to Germany in October, brushing aside questions about the death of Politkovskaya, he told his hosts: 'We do not understand the nervousness of the press about Russia investing abroad. Where does this hysteria come from? It's not the Red Army that wants to come to Germany. It's just the same capitalists as you.'

The political system put together since Yeltsin's departure is a similar mixture of novelty and continuity. It is now de rigueur for Western journalists – even the most ardent boosters of business opportunities in the New Russia, or the humblest spaniels of New Labour, anxious not to smudge Blair's friendship with Putin (two roles that are not always distinct) – to deplore the muzzling of the media, the neutering of parliament and the decline of political freedoms under Putin. These realities, however, all have their origins under Yeltsin, whose illegalities were much starker. No act of Putin's compares with the bombardment of the parliament by tanks, or the fraudulent referendum that ensued, imposing the autocratic constitution under which Russia continues to be ruled. Yet because Yeltsin was considered a pliable, even if somewhat disreputable utensil of Western policies, the first action was applauded and the second ignored by virtually every foreign correspondent of the time. Nor was there much criticism of the brazen manipulation of press and television, controlled by the oligarchs, to engineer Yeltsin's re-election. Still less was any attention paid to what was happening within the machinery of state itself. Far from the demise of the USSR reducing the number of Russian functionaries, the bureaucracy had – few post-Communist facts are more arresting – actually doubled in size by the end of Yeltsin's stewardship, to some 1.3 million. Not only that. At the topmost levels of the regime, the proportion of officials drawn from the security services or armed forces soared above their modest quotas under the late CPSU: composing a mere 5 per cent under Gorbachev, it has been calculated that they occupied no less than 47 per cent of the highest posts under Yeltsin.

Serviceable though much of this was for any ruler, it remained a ramshackle inheritance. Putin has tightened and centralised it into a more coherent structure of power. In possession of voter confidence, he has not needed to shell deputies or forge plebiscites. But to meet any eventuality, the instruments of coercion and intimidation have been strengthened. The budget of the FSB – the post-Communist successor to the KGB – has trebled, and the number of positions in the federal administration held by personnel brigaded from security backgrounds has continued to rise. Over half of Russia's key power-holders now come from its repressive apparatuses. In jovial spirit, Putin allowed himself to quip to fellow veterans in the Lubyanka: 'Comrades, our strategic mission is accomplished – we have seized power.'

Still, these developments are mainly accentuations of what was already there. Institutionally, the more striking innovation has been the integration of the economic and political pillars of Putin's system of command. In the 1990s, people spoke of the assorted crooks who grabbed control of the country's raw materials as *syroviki*, and of officials recruited from the military or secret police as *siloviki*.[1] Under Putin, the two have fused. The new regime is dominated by a web of Kremlin staffers and ministers with 'security profiles', who also head the largest state companies quoted on the stock market. The oligarchs had mixed business and politics flamboyantly enough. But these were raids by freebooters from the first into the second domain. Putin has turned the tables on them. Under his system, a more organic symbiosis between the two has been achieved, this time under the dominance of politics. Today, two deputy prime ministers are chairmen, respectively, of Gazprom and Russian Railways; four deputy chiefs of staff in the Kremlin occupy the same positions in the second largest oil company, a nuclear fuel giant, an energy transport enterprise and Aeroflot. The minister of industry is chairman of the oil pipeline monopoly; the finance minister not only of the diamond monopoly, but of the second largest state bank in the country; the telecoms minister of the biggest mobile phone operator. A uniquely Russian form of *cumul des mandats* blankets the scene.

Corruption is built into any such connubium between profits and power. By general consent, it is now even more widespread than under Yeltsin, but its character has changed. The comparison with China is revealing. In the PRC, corruption is a scourge detested by the population; no other issue arouses the anger of ordinary citizens to such a degree. The central leadership of the CCP is nervously aware of the danger corruption poses to its authority, and on occasion makes a spectacular example of officials who have stolen too much, without being able to tackle the roots of the problem. In Russia, on the other hand, there appears to be little active indignation at the corruption rife at all levels of society. A common attitude is that an official who takes bribes is better than one who inflicts blows: a change to which Brezhnev's 'era of stagnation', after the end of the terror, habituated people. In this climate, Putin – so far, at least, lacking the personal greed that distracted Yeltsin – can coolly use corruption as an instrument of state policy, operating it as both a system of rewards for those who comply with him, and of blackmail for those who might resist.

The scale of the slush funds now available to the Kremlin has made it easy, in turn, to convert television stations and newspapers into mouthpieces of the regime. The fate of NTV and*Izvestiya*, the one created by Gusinsky, the other controlled by Potanin, is emblematic. Both are now dependencies of Gazprom. ORT, once Berezovsky's TV channel, is currently run by a factotum from the FSB. With such changes, Putin's control of the media is becoming more and more comprehensive. What is left over, that ownership does not ensure, self-censorship increasingly neuters.

The *Gleichschaltung* of parliament and political parties is, if anything, even more impressive. The presidential party, United Russia, and its assorted allies, with no more specific programme than unconditional support for Putin, command some 70 per cent of the seats in the Duma, enough to rewrite the constitution if that were required. But a one-party state is not in the offing. On the contrary, mindful of the rules of any self-respecting democracy, the Kremlin's political technicians are now putting together an opposition party designed to clear the bedraggled remnants of Communism – liberalism has already been expunged – from the political scene, and provide a decorative pendant to the governing party in the next parliament.

In sum, the methodical construction of a personalised authoritarian regime with a strong domestic base is well under way. Part of its appeal has come from its recovery of external sovereignty. But here the gap between image and reality is wider than it is on the domestic front. Putin came to power on the crest of a colonial war. In March 1999, the West launched its attack on Yugoslavia. Planning for the reconquest of Chechnya began that same month, under Yeltsin. In early August, Putin – then head of the FSB – was made prime minister. In the last week of September, invoking hostile incursions into Dagestan, Russia launched an aerial blitz on Chechnya explicitly modelled on Nato's six-week bombardment of Yugoslavia. Up to a quarter of the population was driven out of the country, before an invasion had even begun. After enormous destruction from the air, the Russian army advanced on Grozny, which was besieged in early December. For nearly two months Chechen resistance held out against a hail of fuel-air explosives and tactical missiles that left the city a more completely burnt-out ruin than Stalingrad had ever been. At the height of the fighting, on New Year's Eve, Yeltsin handed over his office to Putin. New presidential elections were set for late March. By the end of February, the Russian high command felt able to announce that 'the counter-terrorism operation is over.' Putin flew down to celebrate victory. Clinton

hailed the ‘liberation of Grozny’. Blair sped to St Petersburg to embrace the liberator. Two weeks later, Putin was elected by a landslide.

Such was the baptism of the present regime, at which holy water was sprinkled by the West. Bush added his unction the following year, after looking into the Russian president’s soul. In return for this goodwill Putin was under some obligation, which persisted. The occupation of the country did not end national resistance: Chechnya became the corner of hell it has remained to this day. But no matter how atrocious the actions of Russian troops and their local collaborators, Western chancelleries have tactfully looked away. After 9/11, Chechnya was declared another front in the war on terror, and in the common cause Putin opened Russian airspace for B52s to bomb Afghanistan, accepted American bases in Central Asia, and primed the Northern Alliance for Kabul. So eager was Moscow to please Washington that in the emotion of the moment, it even abandoned its listening post in Cuba, of scant relevance to Enduring Freedom in West Asia. But it soon became clear there would be little reward for such gestures. In December 2001, the Bush administration scrapped the ABM Treaty. Russian friends were sidelined in the puppet government installed in Afghanistan. Jackson-Vanik trade restrictions were not repealed.

In this climate, it was asking too much for Russia to underwrite the war on Iraq. Still, the US was not to be antagonised. Left to his own devices, Putin would have preferred to say the bare minimum about it. But once France and Germany came out against the impending invasion, it was not easy for him to sidle quietly off-stage. On a visit to Paris, Chirac cornered him into a joint communiqué opposing the war – though the French alone threatened a veto in the Security Council. Once back home, Putin took care to phone Bush with expressions of sympathy for his difficult decision, and made no fuss about the occupation. Yet by the end of his first term in office, the terms of Russia’s relationship with the West had changed. A fortnight after Putin was re-elected in mid-March 2004, Nato expanded to Russia’s doorstep, with the accession of the Baltic states. But even if Washington had given Moscow little or nothing, Russia was no longer a supplicant. Oil prices, little more than $18 a barrel when Putin came to power, were now over $40, and rising rapidly towards their current level at $60 plus – netting Russia a windfall of $37 billion in extra revenues in 2005 alone. More autonomy was now affordable. The upshot so far has remained quite limited: clumsy attempts to check further Western entrenchment along Russia’s southern marches, by

browbeating Ukraine and Georgia; refusal to derogate control of pipelines to Europe; revision of offshore concessions in Sakhalin. But Russia's shadow as an energy giant is lengthening. It is now the world's largest producer of gas and, after Saudi Arabia, the second largest exporter of oil. As Europe becomes more dependent on its energy, the country's leverage is bound to grow. No diplomatic revolution is in prospect. But Russia has ceased to be a ward of the West.

How has the change been received there? Reactions to Putin's regime vary, but they form a certain pattern, falling within a given range. At one end of the spectrum, there is virtually unconditional endorsement of the Russia that is now emerging. The leading exponent of this view, the economist Andrei Shleifer, helped – not coincidentally – to lay the foundations of the new order, working in Moscow as one of the drafters of Yeltsin's privatisations, and beneficiaries of the proceeds. Project director of the Harvard Institute for International Development, financed by the US government to promote 'economic reform in support of open markets' in the former USSR, he was prosecuted by the Justice Department on his return to the US for criminal conduct – cashing in on his insider position for investment purposes. Harvard had to pay $26.5 million, and Shleifer and his wife $3.5 million to settle the charges against him. This was the scandal that led to the downfall of his patron Larry Summers, who as Clinton's deputy secretary of the Treasury set up the Harvard project, and was then implicated in the pay-out, as president of the university. Shleifer's central contention, set out in an article written with Daniel Treisman in *Foreign Affairs* in 2004, is that Russia has become a 'normal middle-income country': that is, a society with much the same growing prosperity, degrees of political and economic freedom, levels of corruption and inequality, restrictions on the media and controls on the judiciary, consumer choice and contested elections, as can be found in Mexico or Turkey or the Philippines, or anywhere else with a statistical per capita income of some $8000 a year.

Shleifer concedes that, like most such places, which fall 'somewhere between textbook democracy and a full-fledged authoritarianism', Russia may not be a particularly secure or just society. But – and this is what matters – it is par for the course within its global bracket, which given the debris left by Communism is a remarkable achievement. For many Russians, to be congratulated on rising to the company of Turks or Mexicans might leave mixed feelings. But by lowering the standard of relevant comparison, an unequivocally affirmative conclusion can be reached. Russia is a

perfectly normal country for its level of development. It is exceptional only in the historical handicaps it has had to overcome to get there, and so unusually admirable.

Few verdicts are quite as upbeat as this. More common is the approach to be found in writers for the *Financial Times* – another investor in the new Russia, with a joint venture in the media – which has devoted a great deal of attention to the country, consistently talking up its prospects, while expressing dutiful regrets at the shadows or side effects of progress. *Inside Putin's Russia* by Andrew Jack, the paper's Moscow correspondent, illustrates the genre. Decent space is accorded the failings of the regime, and proper anxiety voiced about the future of liberties under it, without dwelling unnecessarily on these – 'criticising without animosity and making the right allowances for peculiarities of history and culture', as the *FT* put it. Chechnya, inevitably, figures prominently among the allowances. Jack explains that it is wrong to blame Putin, himself a 'prisoner of the Caucasus', excessively for a situation 'where Chechnya and Russia have been at war of one sort or another ever since the two cultures first collided three centuries ago': euphemisms to rank in some universal treasury of colonial apologetics. The results of the conflict may be unfortunate, but it is a sideshow. What matters is the balance sheet of Putin's 'liberal authoritarianism'. Here, the touchstone is thoroughly reassuring. In building a society 'infinitely better for its citizens and foreign partners than the USSR', Putin has achieved the essential: he has 'cemented the transition from Communism to capitalism in a way that neither of his predecessors was able to achieve'.

Of course, since property rights remain insecure and justice is arbitrary, there continue to be grounds for concern. Delicately, Jack ventures the thought that, despite his achievements, 'Putin's commitment to democracy and market reform is questionable.' A robuster brand of optimism was expressed by the late Martin Malia. Author of *The Soviet Tragedy* – a passionate requisitory of Bolshevism from the liberal right, ideologically parallel to François Furet's *Past of an Illusion* (the two were close friends), but intellectually everything it is not, a work of brilliant historical imagination – Malia, after championing Yeltsin, did not balk at his successor. There was no chance, he explained, that Putin could revert to a traditional authoritarianism in today's Russia, since the path to modernisation no longer lay through military-bureaucratic power of a Petrine, let alone Stalinist stamp. It required instead high levels of education and foreign investment, if Russia was to compete in the relevant

contemporary arena, not battlefields but globalised markets. There was little cause to be exercised by Putin's style of political manipulation, which was much like that of Bismarck or Giolitti in their time. Fears of renewed repression were misplaced. The international community no longer tolerated gross violation of human rights, as Bosnia and Kosovo had shown. The conflict in Chechnya was an exception, for there the 'national honour' rather than Russia's 'territorial integrity' was at stake. But now that the deed was done, there would be no need to repeat it. 'As the Chechnya war recedes into the past, the pressure on Russia to observe the new higher norms of international and civic morality will prevent Putin from doing anything extreme.'

Malia offered this absolution in April 2000. Seven years of torture and killing later, the norms – after Grozny, Baghdad – have staled, and the past has not passed. It would be wrong to say that no authorised opinion in the West did better than this. Among journalists, the*Washington Post* correspondents Peter Baker and Susan Glasser have produced a hard-hitting survey of the new Russia, *Kremlin Rising*, that puts the palliators of the *Financial Times* to shame.[2] Among historians, Richard Pipes, at one with Malia in hostility to Communism, but in temperament and outlook the all but complete opposite, has struck a characteristically dissonant note. Whereas Malia believed it was essentially the First World War that blew Russia off course from a normal Western development, which it could now rejoin, Pipes has always held that the roots of Soviet tyranny lay in age-old autocratic traditions of Russian political culture, a view he has recently reiterated in an elegant monograph, *Russian Conservatism and Its Critics*.[3]

In this vision, Putin's regime occupies a natural place. Russians, the argument goes, lacking social or national cohesion, an understanding of property or wish for responsibility, cynical about democracy, wary of one another and fearful of outsiders, continue to value order over freedom. For them anarchy is the worst evil, authoritarian rule the condition of a peaceable life. Putin is popular, Pipes has explained in *Foreign Affairs*, 'precisely because he has reinstated Russia's traditional model of government: an autocratic state in which citizens are relieved of their responsibilities for politics and in which imaginary foreign enemies are invoked to forge an artificial unity'. Such bleak thoughts, at the other end of the spectrum from Shleifer's good cheer, are less well received in Western chancelleries. There, constructive relations with Moscow, intact throughout the wars in Chechnya, are proof against minor embarrassments like the

assassination of a critic or a defector. A billionaire property developer is worth a UN tribunal; who cares about a stray journalist or émigré? Noting with relief that in the Litvinenko investigation, witnesses are inaccessible and extradition unthinkable, the *Economist* has confided to its readers that 'such frustrations may not be all bad,' since 'British diplomats' biggest worry is not that Scotland Yard will be flummoxed, but that it might succeed.'

Too much has been invested in the triumph over Communism for any deeper doubts about the destiny of Russia. Either blemishes are normal and superable at this stage of development. Or they are the regrettable but unavoidable costs of capitalist progress. Or they are indurated vices of the longue durée. That the West itself might be implicated in whatever is amiss can be excluded. The US ambassador to Moscow in the late 1980s, Jack Matlock, has explained why: 'Presidents Reagan and Gorbachev, in effect, co-operated on a scenario, a plan of reforming the economy, which was defined initially by the United States. The plan was devised by the United States, but with the idea that it should not be contrary to the national interests of a peaceful Soviet Union.' Gorbachev 'adopted the US agenda, which had been defined in Washington, without attribution, of course, as his own plan'. Adult supervision – the term once employed by another US envoy, Zalmay Khalilzad of Kabul and Baghdad, to describe his country's relations with the world at large – was even closer under Yeltsin. By these lights, if anything goes wrong, the progenitors are certainly not to blame. See Iraq today.

At Politkovskaya's funeral, the three principal forces behind Yeltsin's regime were all on hand. Two of them, hypocrisies obliging: the West, in the persons of the American, British and German ambassadors; and the oligarchs *par personne interposée*, in the figure of Chubais, to most Russians more odious, as their procurer, than the oligarchs themselves. The third, in authentic grief, waiting outside: the tattered conscience of the liberal intelligentsia. In 1991, of all domestic groups it was mainly this stratum that helped Yeltsin to power, confident that in doing so it was at last bringing political liberty to Russia. Clustered around the presidency in the early 1990s, when it occupied many policy-making positions, it supplied the crucial democratic legitimation of Yeltsin's rule to the end. Not since 1917 had intellectuals played such a central role in the government of the country.

Fifteen years later, what has become of this intelligentsia? Economically speaking, much of it has fallen victim to what it took to be the foundation of the freedom to

come, as the market has scythed through its institutional supports. In the Soviet system, universities and academies were decently financed; publishing houses, film studios, orchestras all received substantial state funding. These privileges came at the cost of censorship and a good deal of padding. But the tension bred by ideological controls also kept alive the spirit of opposition that had defined the Russian intelligentsia since the 19th century – and for long periods been its virtual raison d'être.

With the arrival of neo-liberalism, this universe abruptly collapsed. By 1997, budgets for higher education had been slashed to one-twelfth of their late Soviet level. The number of scientists fell by nearly two-thirds. Russia currently spends just 3.7 per cent of GDP on education – less than Paraguay. University salaries became derisory. Just five years ago, university professors got $100 a month, forcing them to moonlight to make ends meet. Schoolteachers fared still worse: even today, average wages in education are only two-thirds of the national rate. According to the Ministry of Education itself, only 10 to 20 per cent of Russian institutions of higher learning have preserved Soviet standards of quality. The state now provides less than a third of their funding. Bribes to pass examinations are commonplace. In the press and publishing worlds, which had seen an explosion of growth in the years of perestroika, circulation and sales shrank remorselessly after 1991, as paper costs soared and readers lost interest in public affairs. *Argumenty i Fakty*, under Gorbachev the country's largest mass-circulation weekly, sold 32 million copies in 1989. It is now down to around three million.

For a time, even with shrinking sales, the better newspapers provided a lively variety of reportage and commentary, in which many good journalists won their spurs. But as factional struggles broke out in Yeltsin's court, and the grip of different oligarchs on the media tightened, corruption of every kind spread through the press, from back-handers and*kompromat* to abject propaganda for the regime. In this atmosphere, a race to the bottom followed, in which the crudest tabloids, devoted to sensations and celebrities, predictably won out. Meanwhile, the print media as a whole were losing importance to television. Initially a dynamic force in awakening and mobilising public opinion – it played a key role in the overthrow of the old order in August 1991 – Russian TV started with a high level of professional skills and public ambitions. But it too sank rapidly under the tide of commercialisation, its most-watched programmes

descending to levels of crassness and inanity rivalling deepest America. Among the educated, so despised has the medium become that Russia must be the only country in the world today where one can be regularly told, with a look of contempt at the question, as if it went without saying, that the speaker has no television set in the house.

All this was demoralising enough for an intelligentsia that, whatever its internal disputes, had always taken its role as *Kulturträger* for granted. But with the starving of the universities, the decline of the press and the infantilisation of television, came a further alteration. For the first time in its history, money became the general arbiter of intellectual worth. To be needy was now to be a failure, evidence of an inability to adapt creatively to the demands of competition. Pushed by economic hardship, pulled by temptations of success, many who were formed as scholars or artists went into business ventures of one kind or another, often of dubious legality. Some of the oligarchs started out like this. The spectacle of this migration into a universe of shady banking and trading, 'political technology' (campaign-running and election-fixing) and public asset-stripping, in turn affected those left behind. Others, who had specialist scientific skills, got better jobs abroad. In these conditions, as the common values that once held it together corroded, the sense of collective identity that distinguished the traditional intelligentsia has been steadily weakened.

The result is a cultural scene more fragmented, and disconnected, than at any time within memory. The collapse of the centralised book and periodical distribution system that existed in Soviet times has created difficulties for independent publishers, leaving the field outside Moscow and St Petersburg to four or five big commercial houses which own their own outlets in the provinces, publishing mostly trash while angling for textbook contracts from the government. The most significant literary enterprise is *Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie*, started in 1992 and now Russia's leading literary journal, whose small book publishing arm produces about 75 titles a year, concentrated in the humanities. Founded and managed by Irina Prokhorova, sister of the magnate who is Potanin's partner in Norilsk Nickel, it also runs a cultural-political journal, *Neprikosnovenny Zapas* ('Emergency Supplies'), that offers a forum for intellectual debate, and has just launched – a sign of the times – a lavish journal of fashion theory. The most coherent attempt to create something like the equivalent of the Silver Age milieu at the turn of the last century, the *NLO* project can be regarded as

a modest oasis of reflection in an increasingly philistine scene. But by the same token it remains an enclave, liberal in temperament, but detached from politics proper. To its left, a scattering of tiny, no doubt mostly transient publishing houses has sprung up, and twigs of a radical counter-culture can be seen. In the very centre of New Russian ostentation in Moscow, hidden upstairs in a side street just behind the gross parade of luxury stores on the Tverskaya, the shabby Phalanster bookshop lives up to its Fourierist overtones: posters of Chávez, translations of Che, biographies of Bakunin, at last – just out – the Russian edition of Deutscher's masterpiece, his Trotsky trilogy, all this amid every other kind of serious literature.

Outside, the Tverskaya with its boutiques and chain stores sets the tone. The culture of capitalist restoration looks back, logically enough, to the object-universe of late tsarism, whose garish emblems are everywhere. Moscow retains its autumnal beauty, even if as elsewhere – Weimar or Prague – too much new paint tends to coarsen older buildings rather than reviving them. But now it is enveloped in a smog of kitsch, like ancient regalia buried within a greasy wrapper. The city has become a world capital of bad taste, in which even the postmodern can seem a caricature of itself. All this physical trumpery reflects the dominant landscape of the imaginary. Within a few years, Russia has spawned a mass culture fixated on postiche versions of the dynastic past. The country's most successful author, Boris Akunin, writes detective novels set in the last third of the 19th century. Among other stirring deeds, his upright hero Erast Fandorin thwarts a plot to hold the coronation of Nicholas II to ransom.

More than 15 million copies of the Fandorin series have been sold since 1998, and box-office hits have duly followed. *The Councillor of State*, in which Fandorin rescues the throne, stars Russia's favourite actor/film-maker Nikita Mikhalkov, an ardent monarchist who plays Alexander III in his own patriotic blockbuster, *The Barber of Siberia*. Mikhalkov is a middlebrow figure, but higher up the scale, Alexander Sokurov, the country's leading art-film director, reproduces much the same sensibility in his film *Russian Ark*, in which a prancing, gibbering Marquis de Custine leads a motley company of historical figures, in a 360° continuous camera movement round the Hermitage, that concludes with a final maudlin tableau of the Romanov court on the tragic eve of its fall, worthy of the *Sissi* series. (In *The Sun*, yet more striking camerawork, and even sicklier schmaltz, give us the quiet dignity and humanity of Hirohito, as he converses with an understanding MacArthur.)

This dominant vein of Russian *poshlost* today covers the gamut from pulp to middle-market to aestheticising forms, but it is the first of these that is most revealing of mutations in the culture at large. For, characteristically, a phenomenon like the Fandorin series is not the product of a Russian Grisham or King. Boris Akunin is the pseudonym of a trained philologist and translator of classical Japanese, Grigory Chkartashvili, inspired – he avows – by Griboedov, Lermontov, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky; his hero combines traits of Chatsky, Pechorin, Andrei Bolkonski and Prince Myshkin, with a touch of James Bond for good measure. Coquetting in the manner of a latter-day Propp, he has set out to illustrate the 16 possible sub-genres of crime fiction, and 16 character types to be found in it. Hugely successful pulp, marketed as serious fiction and produced by writers from an elite background, would be an anomaly in the West, if we except a single bestseller, never repeated, from Umberto Eco, though there is a close parallel in the astronomic sales and standing of China's leading practitioner of martial arts fiction, Jin Yong, holder of various honorary positions at universities in the PRC. In Russia, it is a pattern: high-end intellectuals hitting the jackpot in low-end literature – Akunin is not alone – are one of the kinks of the encounter between the intelligentsia and the market.

The poverty of all this retro-tsarist culture reflects the impossibility of any meaningful repossession of the world of the Romanovs. The old order incubated a rough-hewn capitalism, but itself remained patrimonial to the end, dominated not by merchants or industrialists, but nobles and landowners. No living memory connects with this past: it is too different, and too remote, from the present to serve as more than vicarious pap. The Soviet past, on the other hand, remains all too immediate, and so in another way unmanageable. With few exceptions, the intelligentsia repudiates it en bloc. The population, on the other hand, is deeply divided: between those who regret the fall of the USSR, those who welcomed it, and those – perhaps the majority – whose feelings are mixed or ambivalent. The Soviet Union was not the Third Reich, and there is little sign of any *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*along German lines. In the culture at large, the tensions in social memory have produced a patchy amnesia.

Such tensions have certainly not silenced the arts. Fiction aiming at more than entertainment has never avoided the Soviet experience. Since the 1990s, however, representations of it have tended to become volatilised in the blender of de-realisations that typifies much current literature. Russian fiction has always had strong strains of

the fantastic, the grotesque, the supernatural and the utopian, in a line that includes not only Gogol and Bulgakov – presently the two most fashionable masters – but such diverse figures as Chernyshevsky, Leskov, Bely, Zamiatin, Nabokov, Platonov and others. What is new in the current versions of this tradition is their cocktail of heterogeneous genres and tropes of an alternative reality, which seeks to maximise provocation and *dépaysement*. But such formal ingenuity, however startling, tends to leave its objects curiously untouched. The same techniques can dispose of Communist and post-Communist realities alike, as a single continuum. In Viktor Pelevin's most lyrical work, *The Clay Machine-Gun*, the Cheka of the Civil War, the bombardment of the White House and the contemporary Russian mafia dance and merge in the same phantasmagoria. At its best, such literature is splendidly acrobatic. But, satirical and playful, most of it is too lightweight to impinge on deeper structures of feeling about the past.

Scholarship is another story. There, the tensions in public feeling often seem to have had the effect of sealing off the Soviet experience as a radioactive area for serious reflection or research. In the universities, scholars prefer to concentrate on epochs prior to the Revolution. The situation of Russia's leading authority on the Stalinist period, Oleg Khlevniuk, is expressive. A young party historian reduced to penury with the collapse of the USSR, he was rescued almost accidentally from having to try his luck in business by a research contract from the Birmingham Centre for Russian and East European Studies. Fifteen years later, he still depends essentially on Western grants. *The History of the Gulag* was published by Yale, and has been translated into several other Western languages. Incredibly, there is no Russian edition of it.

From the opposite background, Nikita Petrov was a youthful dissident and early organiser of Memorial, the glasnost-era civic organisation. Later, picked as a radical democrat for the commission set up by Yeltsin to supply evidence for the outlawing of the CPSU as a criminal organisation, he was given access to secret police archives, of which he made good scholarly use. His latest book is a biography of Khrushchev's KGB chief, Ivan Serov. Today, Memorial is a shadow of its former self: no longer a political movement, but a residual institution funded from the West, amid general indifference to its work among the Russian population. As for research, since the mid-1990s sensitive archives have been essentially closed – only about twenty pages a day are available from Stalin's personal files, for the thirty years of his power, a fraction of

what any modern ruler generates – and mid-level bureaucrats obstruct any inquiries likely to affront the new nationalism. But in fact, Petrov remarks, there is now little interest in critical study of the Soviet past – revelations of its crimes no longer have any impact. His major work on Yezhov, written with the Dutch scholar Marc Jansen – an astonishing portrait of the man and his time – has never found a publisher in Russia. Can translation costs be the only reason? In his view, the popular mood is now one of incurious nostalgia for Stalinism. In 1991 Petrov could not have imagined such a political reversal would be possible.

Economically, culturally, psychologically, the Russian intelligentsia has been pulled apart by the changes of the last fifteen years. The term itself is now repudiated by those for whom it smacks too much of a common identity and a revolutionary past: contemporary intellectuals should shun the suspect traditional term *intelligent* in favour of the neologism *intellektual*, of healthier American origin, to denote the new independent-minded individual, distinct from the collective herd of old. Such dissociations themselves have a long history, going back at least to the denunciations of the radical intelligentsia by *Vekhi*, the famous symposium of writers on the rebound from the 1905 Revolution, who might now be called neo-conservative, but were then nearly all liberals. Today, vigorous questioning of the self-images of the contemporary intelligentsia can be found across the spectrum, but attacks on its historical role again occur mainly in liberal journals – the debate in the autumn in *Neprikosnovenny Zapas* is an example. But their context has altered. The events of 1991, not those of 1905-7, constituted the first revolution liberals could call their own. Politically, how then does Russian liberalism stand today?

Hostility – often, in private, verbally extreme hostility – to Putin's regime is widespread. But of public opposition there is little. The reason is not only fear, though that exists. It is also the knowledge, which can only be half-repressed, that the liberal intelligentsia is compromised by its own part in bringing to being what it now so dislikes. By clinging to Yeltsin long after the illegality and corruption of his rule was plain, in the name of defence against a toothless Communism, it destroyed its credibility in the eyes of much of the population, only to find that Yeltsin had landed it with Putin. Now, with a mixture of bad conscience and bad faith, it struggles to form a coherent story of the change.

Why, people in these circles often complain, do the Western media portray the 1990s as a time of chaos, crime and corruption – negative stereotypes of every kind – when in fact it was the freest and best period in the history of the country, yet treat Russia today as a democracy, when 'we live under fascism'? True, certain intellectuals have also taken to denigrating the 1990s, but that is out of resentment at having lost the privileged living they enjoyed under the Soviet system, when they got comfortable salaries and flats and had to do nothing, whereas now they have to find some genuine work in the market. What then of the personal and institutional continuities between the Yeltsin and Putin regimes? Oh, those. Our mistake was to have been naive about the kind of human society the Soviet system had created, which quickly reasserted itself and produced Putin – who, in any case, 'is not the worst' it could have thrown up. In other words, whatever has gone wrong in Russia, it was not Yeltsin's fault, or their own.

It was clear from the very beginning of the August overturn that a test of the new Russian liberalism would be its handling of the nationalities question, where the old – *Vekhi* and its sequels – had conspicuously failed. During the first Chechen War, it acquitted itself honourably, opposing Russia's invasion and welcoming its acceptance of defeat. But the second Chechen War broke its moral spine. A few protests continued, but by and large the liberal intelligentsia persuaded itself that Islamic terrorism threatened the motherland itself, and had to be crushed, no matter what the cost in lives. A year later, America's own war on terror allowed a gratifying solidarity with the West. Today, few express much enthusiasm for the Kadyrov clan in Grozny: most prefer to avoid mention of Chechnya. Leading courtiers of Yeltsin, still flanking or advising Putin, are more outspoken. Gaidar has explained that it is difficult for outsiders to understand 'what the aggression against Dagestan in 1999 meant for Russia. Dagestan is part of our life, part of our country, part of our reality' (*sic* – Russians make up 9 per cent of the population). Thus 'the issue was no longer the Chechen people's right to self-determination. It was the question of whether Russian citizens should be protected by their own government.' Chubais has been blunter: Russia's goal in the new century, he recently declared, should be a 'liberal empire'.

Such views are naturally welcome enough in the Kremlin, though these particular voices are something of a liability. Around the regime, however, are more credible forces, recruited from the democrats of 1991, who provide it with critical support from

a distinctive position within the liberal tradition. Grouped around the successful weekly *Ekspert* – a business-oriented cross between *Time* and the *Economist* – and in the back-rooms of United Russia, their outlook could be compared to Max Weber's in the Second Reich. The fall of the USSR was, they believe, the work of a joint revolt by liberal and national (not just Baltic, Ukrainian or Georgian, but also Russian) forces. But under Yeltsin, these two split apart, as more and more Russians with a sense of national pride felt that Yeltsin had become a creature of the Americans, while liberals remained bound to him. Putin's genius, in this version, has been to reconcile national and liberal opinion once again, and so create the first government in Russian history to enjoy a broad political consensus. The market-fundamentalism and retro-Communism of the 1990s, each now a spent force, are no longer alternatives. In bringing calm and order to the country, Putin has achieved 'hegemonic stability'.

By their own lights, the intellectuals who articulate this vision – typically from scientific or engineering backgrounds, like many novelists – are clear-eyed about the limitations and risks of the regime, which they discuss without euphemism. Putin's style is to give concessions to all groups, from oligarchs to the common people, while keeping power in his own hands. He is 'statist' in every instinct, despising and distrusting businessmen; though he does not persecute them, he affords no help to small or medium enterprises, so that in practice only the huge raw materials and banking monopolies thrive. Politically, he is a 'presidential legitimist', in a Congress of Vienna sense, and so will respect the constitution and step down in 2008 – after choosing his successor. Who might that be? Here, they show some nervousness. For even if Putin does not decide on a third term, he will still be very much at large – only 55, and having amassed huge power, informal as well as formal, in his hands. How would a hand-picked successor cope with him? To this, they have no real answer, beyond joking that Russians don't bother talking of a third term, but rather of a fourth or a fifth. Their concern focuses on the successor himself. In favour of strong government but not a dictatorship, patriots rather than nationalists, they are fearful of what the future might bring, should a tougher rather than milder heir be chosen, or another major outrage like the seizure of the Moscow theatre or the school in Beslan allow the 'special services' to impose an emergency regime in Russia.

Those who have cast their lot with hegemonic stability risk repeating the trajectory of the original liberal intelligentsia under Yeltsin, who kept thinking that their advice and

assistance could steer him in the right direction, only to find that he gave them Putin, under whom they tremble. Unable to come to terms with their own responsibilities in backing the attack on the White House and the fake referendum on the constitution, with all that followed, they are now reduced to complaining that a ruinously Sovietised Russian people have proved incapable of accepting the gift of democracy 'we were striving to bring them'. Today's national-liberals are more lucid than the democrats of the 1990s, but it is not clear that they have much more real influence at court than their predecessors. If one of the candidates they most fear – the defence minister, Sergei Ivanov, or even the pallid premier, Mikhail Fradkov, for example – were to be put into the Kremlin, they could find themselves in much the same situation as the limpets of Yeltsin. They hope it will be someone more amenable, like Putin's other favourite, the first deputy premier Dmitri Medvedev, whose task is to give a socially caring face to the regime. But they will have no more say in the choice than other citizens.

Historically, Russian liberalism came in a variety of shades, and it would be wrong to reduce them all today to the pupils of Hayek or Weber. Amid the different adaptations to power of the period, one mind of complete independence stands out. Tall but stooped, almost hunched, with the archetypal bookish look of a scholar, in a square, squinting face lit up with frequent ironic smiles, the historian Dmitry Furman is of White and Red descent. His grandmother, who brought him up and to whom he was always closest, was an aristocrat, his grandfather – the couple were separated – a high Stalinist functionary, who even as a deputy minister lived quite poorly, devoted to his cause and work. Furman explains that he grew up without any Marxist formation, yet no hatred of Communism, regarding it as a new kind of religion, of which there had always been many sorts. After graduating, he did his research on religious conflicts in the Late Roman Empire, and then became a specialist in the history of religions in the Academy of Sciences. He never wrote anything about contemporary events, or had anything to do with them, until perestroika.

When the USSR collapsed, however, he was virtually alone among Russian liberals in regarding the overthrow of Gorbachev as a disaster. For a year afterwards, he worked for the Gorbachev Foundation, and then returned to the Academy of Sciences, where he has since been a researcher at the Institute of Europe, and a prolific essayist on the whole zone covered by the former USSR. He has perhaps the most worked out,

systematic view of post-Communist developments of any thinker in Russia today. It goes like this. The country is a 'managed democracy': that is, one where elections are held, but the results are known in advance; courts hear cases, but give decisions that coincide with the interests of the authorities; the press is plural, yet with few exceptions dependent on the government. This is, in effect, a system of 'uncontested power', increasingly similar to the Soviet state, but without any ideological foundation, which is evolving through a set of stages that parallel those of Russian Communism. The first phase sees the heroic destruction of the old order, a time of Sturm und Drang – Lenin and Yeltsin. The second is a time of consolidation, with the construction of a new, more stable order – Stalin and Putin. The leader of the second phase always enjoys much broader popular support than the leader of the first, because he unites the survivors of the original revolution, still attached to its values, and the anti-revolutionaries, who detested the anarchic atmosphere and the radical changes it brought. Thus Putin today continues Yeltsin's privatisations and market reforms, but creates order rather than chaos. The successor to Putin in the third stage – comparable to Khrushchev – is unlikely to be as popular as Putin, because the regime, like its predecessors, is already becoming more isolated from the masses. Putin's high ratings in the polls are entirely a function of his occupancy of the presidency: the rulers of Kazakhstan or Azerbaijan – Nazarbaev or Aliev – can match them, because their systems are so similar.

But the regime in Russia will face a serious problem in 2008, and considerable tension is already being generated. Will Putin step down and hand over the presidency to a successor, or will he change the constitution and stay on? Either course is full of risks. He could easily change the constitution to let him stay in the Kremlin indefinitely, as Nazarbaev has done in Kazakhstan – the parliament will do what he wants, and the West would not complain too much. But this would install something closer to a traditional dictatorship than to a managed democracy, requiring an ideology of some kind, which Putin entirely lacks. So although he is now studying the interwar writings of the theorist Ivan Ilin, then a semi-Fascist émigré in Germany, the best guess is that he will not want to perpetuate himself in power, since this would require too great an ideological upheaval.

Might not nationalism provide such a basis, if it is not already doing so? Furman dismisses the possibility. Russian nationalism is too low-powered to take the place of

democracy as a legitimation of Putin's rule. It is not a fanatical force like the nationalism that sustained Hitler's regime, rather an impotent resentment that Russia can no longer bully its neighbours as it once did. The current campaign against Georgians is an instance: an expression of the frustration of a former master-people, that has now to treat those who were once its inferiors as equals. The result is a pattern of sudden rages over minor issues, explosions that are then as quickly forgotten – disputes with Ukraine over this or that dam, clamours over Serbia, and so on. These are neurotic, not psychotic symptoms. Such petty rancours are not enough to found a new dictatorship. That is why legitimation by the West remains important to the regime, and is in some degree a restraint on it. Since it has no ideology of its own, and cannot rely on a broken-backed nationalism, it must present itself as a specific kind of democracy that is accepted by the G7 – Russia as a 'normal country' that has rejoined Western civilisation.

On the other hand, if Putin doesn't change the constitution, and steps down from the presidency in 2008, there will also be a big problem for the system, since for the first time in Russian history there would then be two centres of power in the country – the new and the old president. This is a formula for political instability, as the bureaucracy would waver between two masters, not knowing which one to obey. Putin may think he will select a pliable successor, but historically this has never worked: such figures always want to exercise full power themselves. Stalin was picked as the least outstanding figure by the Party after the death of Lenin, for fear of the stronger personality of Trotsky, and he became an all-powerful despot. Khrushchev was selected as a compromise first secretary after Stalin, rather than the more powerful Beria or Malenkov – and promptly ousted them and seized power for himself. So it was too with the mediocre personality of Brezhnev, chosen as least dangerous by his colleagues. The pattern would be likely to recur after 2008.

Asked his view of Pipes's diagnosis of Russia's deep political culture – no popular understanding of democracy, or rule of law; tyranny always preferable to anarchy – Furman answers matter-of-factly: yes, it is more or less accurate, but Pipes is wrong to think this is uniquely Russian. It is a very widespread political culture, which you can see throughout the Middle East, in Burma, in Uzbekistan and elsewhere. We should not whitewash or embellish Russian political culture, but we should also not think of it as exceptional. Nor is it correct to imagine that there has been any significant revival of

religion in post-Communist Russia. The Orthodox Church has been absorbed as an element of national identity, and officiates at baptisms and funerals. But not weddings – sexual life is completely secular – and rates of regular attendance at church are among the lowest in Europe.

If the second phase in the cycle of managed democracy is now coming to an end in Russia, what of the third and fourth phases, comparable to the Khrushchev and Brezhnev periods under Communism? The whole cycle, Furman replies, will be much shorter – not seventy, but about thirty years. We are probably at midpoint right now. As for the future: the Russian intelligentsia was briefly in power in 1991, but its ideology was primitive and its outlook naive. So when the democracy it wanted was discarded by Yeltsin, the defeat of democracy was the defeat of this intelligentsia too. Only when Russian intellectuals have produced a self-critical assessment of this experience will it be able to develop new and sounder ideals for the future.

This is an impressively level-headed diagnosis of the country's condition. Its limitation lies in the unargued premise of the argument. Managed democracy *à la russe* is tacitly viewed as a transition that, with all its warts, leads towards genuine democracy. Within the very sobriety of the scheme, a hopeful teleology is at work. Only one terminus is possible: the liberty of the moderns embodied in the Western *Rechtsstaat*. Realist in its judgments about Russia, the model is idealist in its assumptions about the West. Certainly, the two remain very different. But can the differences, and their direction, be captured by Furman's implied dichotomy? For who imagines the political systems of the West to be 'unmanaged' democracies? Their own regressions are not factored into the evolutionary scheme. The idealising side of Furman's construction exposes itself to the *tu quoque* retorts with which Putin and his aides now relish silencing criticism by the West.

All of these debates revolve around the nature of the state. Society is less discussed. In the West, the historians of the USSR who challenged the Cold War paradigms of Pipes and Malia – Sheila Fitzpatrick has described their rebellion in these pages – famously focused on the activities and textures of daily life in the Soviet Union, as popular realities often at variance with official myths, though not necessarily undermining them: the outcome from below, rather than the intention from above. Post-Communism offers a vast field for research of this kind, looking at the ways in which ordinary people are surviving in the new institutional wilderness. Two Russian

sociologists, both living abroad, have given us striking ethnographic descriptions of some of them. In *How Russia Really Works*, Alena Ledeneva, who teaches in London, takes us through the dense thicket of 'informal' practices – some entirely new, like*kompromat*, others a mutation of traditional forms, like *krugovaya poruka* – that have sprung up in politics, professions, business and the media, all of them breaking or circumventing official rules.[4]

For Ledeneva, they are essentially inventive kinds of illegality, developed in response to the increasing role of formal law in a society where legality itself remains perpetually discretionary and manipulated. As such, they at once support and subvert the advance of a more developed rule of law in Russia. Critical though her account of this paradox is, it comes with a wry affection and upbeat conclusion: all these ingenious ways of fixing or bending the rules contribute in their own fashion to an ongoing, positive process of modernisation. The underlying message is: the Russians are coping. Here it is Western modernity rather than democracy that is taken for granted, as the unspoken telos. A darker verdict can be found in Andrew Wilson's *Virtual Politics*, a blistering study of the 'political technology' of blackmail and bribery, intimidation and fraud, in the electoral scene.[5]

Ledeneva's study explores the world of those who are doing well out of Russian capitalism. At the very end of her book, she lets drop that informal practices which were 'often beneficial to ordinary people in allowing them to satisfy their personal needs and to organise their own lives' in times past – 'before the reforms', as she puts it – have now become a system of venality that 'benefits the official-business classes and harms the majority of the population'. The admission is not allowed to ruffle her sanguine conclusions, or uncritical notions of reform. Georgi Derluguian, working in the United States, is more trenchant. Few sociologists alive today, in any language, have the same ability to move from vivid phenomenological analysis of the smallest transactions of everyday existence to systematic theoretical explanation of the grandest mutations of macro-history.

'The collapse of the USSR,' Derluguian argues, 'marks more than the failure of the Bolshevik experiment. It signalled the end of a thousand years of Russian history during which the state had remained the central engine of social development.' Three times – under Ivan IV, under Peter I and Catherine, and under Stalin – a military-bureaucratic empire was constructed on the vast, vulnerable plains, to emulate foreign

advances and resist external invasions, powering its own expansionism. Each time, it was initially successful, and ultimately shattered, as superior force from abroad – Swedish in the Baltic wars, German in the Great War, American in the Cold War – overwhelmed it. But the last of these defeats has buried this form, since it was inflicted not on the battlefield, but in the marketplace. The USSR fell because the traditional 'Russian state-building assets', in Derluguian's phrase, were abruptly 'devalued' by transformation of the world economy. 'Capitalism in the globalisation mode is antithetical to the mercantilist bureaucratic empires that specialised in maximising military might and geopolitical throw-weight – the very pursuits in which Russian and Soviet rulers were enmeshed for centuries.'

In the ensuing disintegration – an implosion under pressure of the new environment – middle-levels of the nomenklatura seized what booty they could, morphing into private asset-strippers or brokers, or reinstalling themselves at different levels, with different titles, in the reconfigured post-Communist bureaucracy. Derluguian has much to say, both picturesque and painful, about this process as it worked itself out in the centre and on the periphery, where he comes from (with an intimate knowledge of the Caucasus). But he never forgets the losers below, 'the silent majority of Russians', who are 'mostly atomised, middle-aged individuals, beaten-down, unheroic philistines trying to make ends meet as decently as they can', after twenty years of betrayed expectations.

In such conditions, the distance between the frayed, precarious fabric of private lives – of a people now 'profoundly tired and resistant to any public mobilising' – and the global canvas on which the destiny of the state is written, seems enormous. Yet there is one traumatic knot that ties them together. In just five years, from 1990 to 1994, the mortality rate among Russian men soared – in peacetime – by 32 per cent, and their average life-expectancy plummeted to under 58 years, below that of Pakistan. By 2003, the population had fallen by more than five million in a decade, and is currently losing 750,000 lives a year. When Yeltsin took power, the total population of Russia was just under 150 million. By 2050, according to official projections, it will be just over 100 million. So many were not undone by Stalin himself.

Official demographers hasten to point out that high mortality rates were already a feature of the Brezhnev period, while low fertility rates are after all a sign of social advance, in syntony with Western Europe. The combination of a mortmain from the

past and an upgrade from the future has been unfortunate, but why blame capitalism? Against these apologetics, Eric Hobsbawm's judgment that the fall of the USSR led to a 'human catastrophe' stands. The starkness of the break in the early 1990s is not to be gainsaid. In the new Russia, as Aids, TB and sky-rocketed rates of suicide are added to the list of traditional killers – alcohol, nicotine and the like – public healthcare has wasted away, on a share of the budget that is no more than 5 per cent: half that of Lebanon. A sense of the sheer desolation of the demographic scene is given by the plight of women – more protected from the catastrophe than men – in contemporary Russia. Virtually half of them are single. In the latest survey, out of every 1000 Russian women, 175 have never been married, 180 are widows and 110 are divorcees, living on their own. Such is the solitude of those who, relatively speaking, are the survivors. There are now 15 per cent more women alive in this society than men.

In power-political terms, a relentless attrition of Russia's human stock has obvious consequences for its role in the world, the subject of urgent addresses to the nation by Putin. What will remain of the greatness of the past? In the 1970s, foreign diplomats were fond of describing the USSR as 'Upper Volta with rockets'. From one angle, Russia today looks more like Saudi Arabia with rockets, although against the waxing of its oil revenues must be set the ageing of its missiles. That the country, even if it has now regained a certain independence, has so come down in the world haunts not only its governing class, but many of its writers. The possible spaces of empire – past or future, native or alien – have become one of the leitmotifs not only of its political discussion, but of its literary imagination.

In the leading example of the 'imperial novel', now an accepted form, Pavel Krusanov constructs a counterfactual history of the 20th century. His bestseller *Ukus Angela* ('Bite of the Angel' – 200,000 copies) recounts a Russia that has never known a revolution, and instead of contracting in size, expands to absorb the whole of China and the Balkans, under the superhuman command of Ivan Nekitaev ('Not-Chinese'), a tyrant of Olympian freedom from all morality. Vladimir Sorokin inverts the schema in his latest novel, *Den' Oprichnika*('The Day of the Oprichnik'). By the year 2027 the monarchy has been restored in a self-enclosed Russia, surrounded by a Great Wall, and run by a reincarnation of Ivan IV's corps of terrorists, under the thumb of China, whose goods and settlers dominate economic life, and whose language is the preferred idiom of the tsar's children themselves.

These are fictions. The polyglot intelligence specialist Aleksandr Dugin's *Foundations of Geopolitics* draws on Carl Schmitt and Halford Mackinder to counterpose powers of the sea (the Atlantic world centred on the US) to powers of the land, stretching from the Maghreb to China, but centred on Russia, as their natural adversary. Originally, Moscow-Berlin, Moscow-Tokyo and Moscow-Tehran featured as the three main axes in the front against America. Later, a Slavo-Turkish alliance has been conjured up. Borrowing the title of Armin Mohler's work of 1949, Dugin terms the eventual victory of the powers of the land over those of the sea the 'conservative revolution' to come. His colleague Aleksandr Prokhanov, 'the nightingale of the general staff', doubles as bestselling novelist, with *Gospodin Geksogen*, a conspiracy tale of Putin's ascent to power, and theorist of a new Eurasian imperium, celebrated in his*Symphony of the Fifth Empire*, just out. These are writers who have dabbled in the murky waters of the far right, but today enjoy a wider political and intellectual entrée.

Dugin's*Geopolitics* carries an introduction from the head of the strategy department of the general staff. Prokhanov's *Symphony*, covered on national television, was launched under the patronage of Nikita Mikhalkov, in the presence of representatives of the ruling United Russia and the neo-liberal Union of Right Forces, Gaidar's party.

The extravagance of these dreamlands of imperial recovery is an indication not of any feasible ambition, but of a psychology of compensation. The reality is that Russia's rank in the world has been irreversibly transformed. It was a great power continuously for three centuries: longer – this is often forgotten – than any single country in the West. In square miles, it is still the largest state on earth. But it no longer has a major industrial base. Its economy has revived as an export platform for raw materials, with all the risks of over-reliance on volatile world prices familiar in First and Third World countries alike – over-valuation, inflation, import addiction, sudden implosion. Although it still possesses the only nuclear stockpile anywhere near the American arsenal, its defence industry and armed services are a shadow of the Soviet past. In territory, it has shrunk behind its borders at the end of the 17th century. Its population is smaller than that of Bangladesh. Its gross national income is less than that of Mexico.

More fundamental in the long run for the country's identity than any of these changes, some of them temporary, may be the drastic alteration in its geopolitical setting. Russia is now wedged between a still expanding European Union, with eight times its

GDP and three times its population, and a vastly empowered China, with five times its GDP and ten times its population. Historically speaking, this is a sudden and total change in the relative magnitudes flanking it on either side. Few Russians have yet quite registered the scale of the*ridimensionamento* of their country. To the west, just when the Russian elites felt they could at last rejoin Europe, where the country properly belonged, after the long Soviet isolation, they suddenly find themselves confronted with a scene in which they cannot be one European power among others (and the largest), as in the 18th or 19th century, but face a vast, quasi-unified EU continental bloc, from which they are formally – and, to all appearances, permanently – excluded. To the east, there is the rising giant of China, overshadowing the recovery of Russia, but still utterly remote to the minds of most Russians. Against all this, Moscow has only the energy card – no small matter, but scarcely a commensurate counter-balance.

These new circumstances are liable to deal a double blow to Russia's traditional sense of itself. On the one hand, racist assumptions of the superiority of white to yellow peoples remain deeply ingrained in popular attitudes. Long accustomed to regarding themselves as – relatively speaking – civilised and the Chinese as backward, if not barbaric, Russians inevitably find it difficult to adjust to the spectacular reversal of roles today, when China has become an industrial powerhouse towering above its neighbour, and its great urban centres are exemplars of a modernity that makes their Russian counterparts look small and shabby by comparison. The social and economic dynamism of the PRC, brimming with conflict and vitality of every kind, offers a particularly painful contrast, for those willing to look, with the numbed apathy of Russia – and this, liberals might gloomily reflect, without even the deliverance of a true post-Communism. The wound to national pride is potentially acute.

Worse lies to the west. The Asian expanse of Russia, covering three-quarters of its territory, contains only a fifth of its population, falling fast. Eighty out of a hundred Russians live in the quarter of the land that forms part of Europe. Catherine the Great's famous declaration that 'Russia is a European country' was not so obvious at the time, and has often been doubted since, by foreigners and natives alike. But its spirit is deeply rooted in the Russian elites, who have always – despite the urgings of Eurasian enthusiasts – mentally faced west, not east. In many practical ways, post-Communism has restored Russia to the 'common European home' that Gorbachev liked to invoke.

Travel, sport, crime, emigration, dual residence are letting better-off Russians back into a world they once shared in the Belle Epoque. But at state level, with all its consequences for the national psyche, Russia – in being what cannot be included in the Union – is now formally defined as what is not Europe, in the new, hardening sense of the term. The injustice of this is obvious. Inconvenient though it may be for the ideologues of enlargement to acknowledge, Russia's contribution to European culture has historically been greater than that of all the new member-states of the EU combined. In the years to come, it would be surprising if the relationship between Brussels and Moscow did not rub.

Few peoples have had to undergo the variety of successive shocks – liberation, depression, expropriation, attrition, demotion – that Russians have endured in the last decade and a half. Even if these, historically considered, are so far only a brief aftermath of the much vaster turbulences of the 20th century, it is no surprise that the masses are 'profoundly tired and resistant to any public mobilising'. What they will eventually make of the new experiences remains to be seen. For the moment, the people are silent: Pushkin's closing line applies – 'narod bezmolvstvuet.'

[1] Russian terms and phrases. *Syroviki*: those in control of *syryo*, or raw materials; *siloviki*: those in command of *sila*, or force; *kompromat:* compromising information; *krugovaya poruka*: literally, 'circular pledge', or mutual complicity; *poshlost*: (roughly) pretentious banality.

[2] Simon and Schuster, 464 pp., £20, September 2005, 978 0 7432 6431 0.

[3] Yale, 256 pp., £17.95, December 2005, 978 0 300 11288 7.

[4] Cornell, 288 pp., £12.95, October 2006, 978 0 8014 7325 4.

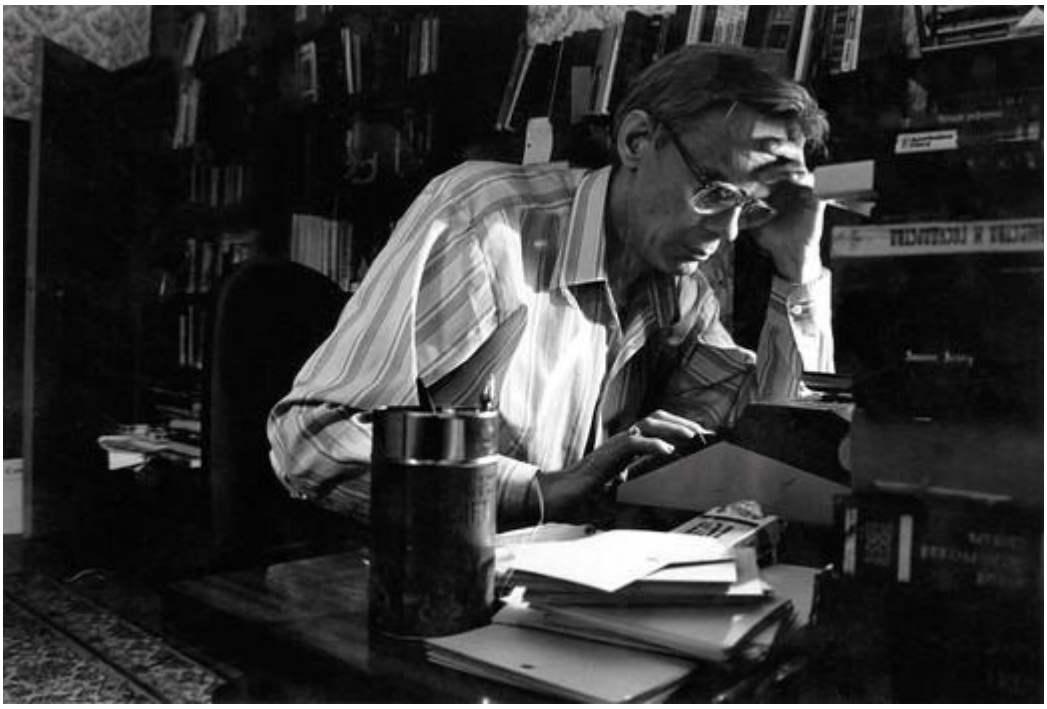
[5] Yale, 336 pp., £20, April 2005, 978 0 300 09545 6.

Imitation Democracy

Perry Anderson writes about Dmitri Furman's analysis of Russia's post-communism

The fall of Gorbachev brought Dmitri Furman's work as Russia's foremost student of religious systems to a reluctant end. Clear-sighted about what was coming under Yeltsin, Furman would henceforward be the best native analyst of Russia's post-communism. But that was not his only change of direction in 1991. Political

commentary, punctual or long-range, was one thing, comparative inquiry of the kind that had driven his studies of religion was another. Where was that now best pursued? As nationalist ferment started to spread in the Baltic and Caucasian zones of the USSR, Furman told a member of the CPSU's Central Committee that nobody in Moscow knew what was going on in the outlying republics, and a research centre was urgently needed to study them. The proposal got nowhere. Instead, over the next twenty years, after the USSR had itself dissolved, Furman made himself into a one-man version of such an institute. Around Russia, 14 independent republics emerged, comprising virtually half of the population of the Soviet Union. By the time of his death in 2011 he had produced substantial work, typically though not invariably with local collaborators, on ten of them. Had he lived longer he would no doubt have completed the set.



Dmitri Furman

After 1991, there were two comparative frameworks in which the evolution of Russia would be conventionally situated. In the West, it was the former Soviet satellites of Eastern Europe that formed the obvious bank of reference. In Russia itself the intelligentsia, which did not appreciate such downsizing, compared developments in the country – for better or worse – with the West. In focusing instead on the ex-Soviet republics themselves, from Central Asia to the Baltic, Furman made not just an unusual hermeneutic decision. He selected a way to consider post-communist Russia that was not only deeply unfashionable but uncomfortable for his compatriots. What

could Kyrgyzstan have to teach a Muscovite? Of his admiration for Gorbachev, Furman once wrote: 'I have never been a "patriot". I thought one doesn't choose one's country, though if one is born in it, one should try to improve it; I never wanted to leave for the West. But I was never proud of my country, although, unlike many of my acquaintances, I did not consider it an utterly dreadful and hopeless place. On the other hand, I didn't like associating with foreigners, for I always felt a little ashamed of being a Russian. It was only under Gorbachev that I started to experience a feeling hitherto unknown to me, pride in my country and its leader.' But just as he first spoke for Gorbachev when everyone else had abandoned him, so he turned to the fate of the other societies that had made up the USSR after it had disappeared from the map, and they had become mental cast-offs in the outlook of his countrymen. He had never felt any attachment to the state created by Lenin, yet in the disinterested commitment with which he threw himself into this enterprise, he became something like the last voice of Soviet internationalism. When he died a friend remarked that the union of republics that had gone was his true homeland.

As with his studies in comparative religion, so his work on comparative post-Communism was not a mere taxonomy but a project at once of social science and political enlightenment, unified by a strong thematic intent. Russians needed to know far more than they did about their former fellow republics, and by doing so they would learn more about themselves, and the lessons they could draw from common experiences, and similar – or differing – patterns beyond them. The first republic he chose for his inquiry signalled that from the outset. Completed in August 1991, on the eve of the failed coup, and published soon afterwards, *The Emergence of Political Organisations in Contemporary Estonia* set what would become his agenda. At the turn of the 1990s, he wrote, the USSR offered a kind of controlled historical experiment for comparative research. Yet while there were in Moscow dozens of specialists on the United States, France or West Germany, there was not a single one on Georgia or Estonia. The Baltic republics, annexed by Stalin in 1940, formed a region of their own within the USSR. There political organisation under perestroika had first taken outspoken nationalist form. But unlike Russian nationalism, a self-destructive and anti-democratic force that could only lead to the end of the USSR, in Estonia there was no contradiction between the national and democratic movements. All three Baltic states would become democratic republics, but of the trio, elections had been most free

in Estonia, the atmosphere calmest, and prospects for democracy best. That was in keeping with its past. If the interwar period had seen weak parties, rising fascist movements and a slide to authoritarian rule in all three, there were significant differences between them. In Lithuania, a Catholic society, political conflicts had been most violent, the regime of the local strongman – hailed by Mussolini – akin to models in the Mediterranean. Latvia had been pulled between Russian and Polish influences. Estonia, enjoying the benefits of a Lutheran church and Swedish connections, produced the mildest dictatorship of the three. The effects of this past were still visible: the region was like an ancient building, walls and ceiling decorated in intricate and variegated patterns, plastered over and daubed with a single colour (red), which when plaster and paint started to crumble could be discerned beneath them.

Returning to the Baltic states a decade later in a volume covering all three, Furman noticed how little interest they took in one another, resisting mutual comparison. That was natural enough, since comparison can lead to evaluation, and so a hierarchy potentially injurious either to neighbours or oneself. But, of course, if comparison along one social or cultural dimension can produce a given assessment, comparison along others may generate different judgments. None yields an all-purpose standard. The Baltic republics had enjoyed a number of past advantages under tsarism which in different ways had persisted after their reincorporation in the Soviet Union. Protestant and Catholic churches had spread literacy earlier. Both confessions were more favourable to independence of thought than Russian Orthodoxy. Moreover, the region had never known a native absolutism, while in the tsarist Russian empire, German and Polish nobles in the Ostland and Lithuania had possessed corporate privileges which their counterparts in Russia did not, rights on which they continued to insist in the face of later policies of Russification, transmitting to the indigenous populations below them, who enjoyed no such rights, a sense of the law absent in Russian popular culture.

Independence came contingently with the defeat of both Russia and Germany in the First World War, and with barons and *szlachta* gone, the smallness of the three countries gave each a social cohesion the vast Russian spaces lacked. Had they not known twenty years of statehood between the wars, increasing assimilation and further immigration might have reconciled them to existence within a federal Russia. As it was, four decades of Soviet rule could not extinguish their memory of independence, and paradoxically prepared them the better for achieving it with a democratic stability

they had never known between the wars, since it unified what had once been ideologically very divided and polarised communities, and economically developed them to higher levels of income and education than Russia itself. Once perestroika opened a political space for local nationalism, it was Lithuania that took the lead, both because the Russian population was far smaller – Catholic birth rates offering less room for immigration – and because the Catholic Church could give the movement an immediate international support that was not available in the same way in Latvia or Estonia. But after independence. the roles were reversed, Lithuania becoming by economic and cultural indicators the laggard of the trio, and Estonia the lead.

Compared with Russia, however, all three countries were models of post-communist success, flourishing democracies with governments alternating in office and economies operating without system-wide corruption. Russians, Furman concluded, should not be discouraged but should take heart from their example. For what was striking was the force of attraction of the new Baltic republics for the Russians living in them. Although by no means always enjoying full citizenship, and inevitably the object of residual suspicion or prejudice, Russians in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, as every poll made clear, appreciated the kind of life they could lead there, not a few having voted for independence from the outset. This was a preference that expressed, in Furman's view, a deep dissatisfaction of Russians with themselves, at once a longing to be truly European and a disbelief that they would ever be so, often covered up with a swaggering chauvinism and xenophobic postures. In the Baltic states, however, Russians were showing that such dissatisfaction could, in the right conditions, be a spur to a spirit of enterprise and learning, a modern self-confidence based on new social habits and values. In due course, they might become like Chinese immigrants in the United States, all the more energetic and successful for the handicaps they had to overcome, and like them offering role models to compatriots at home.

These were later reflections. After his first study of Estonia, Furman turned his attention a year later to another neuralgic zone of nationalism in the last years of Gorbachev, where religion played a far more central role, and there was no such peaceful outcome. Fighting had broken out between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh in 1988, with reciprocal ethnic cleansing escalating to full-scale war in late 1991. In the USSR, Armenia had not only produced a unitary national movement before any other republic; the scale and duration of the conflict

over Nagorno-Karabakh exceeded that of any other struggle in the former Soviet lands. Yet the oppression of the Armenian population by the Azerbaijani authorities in whose territory it lay was not great enough to account for this. What could explain the peculiar intensity of Armenian national investment in the enclave? In Furman's view, two fundamental historical experiences had shaped it. The first was the fateful choice of the Armenian clergy in the fifth century for a quasi-Arian version of Christianity, a primordial heresy for what would become the Orthodox and Catholic Churches. The option for a Miaphysite faith led to the creation of a sui generis script and liturgical language that cut Armenians off from the rest of Christendom, leaving them only with the weakest of links to Copts or Syriacs. The result was a fusion of ethnicity with religion not unlike that of the Jews, minus the conviction of being uniquely chosen by God. Armenia was also a perpetual buffer zone between Byzantium and Persia, and later the Ottoman and Safavid empires, criss-crossed by their armies, and subject to mass deportations, producing a worldwide diaspora of traders and financiers like that of the Jews, if without demographic loss of a homeland.

Then in the 20th century, the Armenians were victims of a Turkish genocide, as the Jews would be of a German. Since there was still a core Armenian territory, with the collapse of the tsarist and Ottoman empires in the First World War the goal of the Armenian national movement was an independent state *in situ*, rather than a colonisation in Palestine. But caught between the Russian Revolution and the threat from Turkey, the dominant Dashnak party opted for the safety of the Bolsheviks and integration into the Soviet Union – no match for the Zionist triumph in the creation of Israel. So the trauma of the genocide found no catharsis, its memory continuing to haunt a people and a diaspora possessed of a millennial cultural-historical identity. When perestroika came, Armenia had far the oldest continuous national movement in the USSR, going back to the last decade of the 19th century, and among the various republics could lead the way in the drive for independence. Once it was launched, however, the recovery of a virtually contiguous Armenian community under the rule of another Turkic oppressor became the nearest compensation within reach for the original trauma – the bid to retrieve it triggering Azeri pogroms against the Armenian minority in Azerbaijan proper, in a fatal reproduction of the trauma itself. The Moscow intelligentsia, Furman argued, had been thoroughly irresponsible in supporting Armenia down this road, which was bringing misery and dislocation, amid a flood of

refugees in each direction, to both countries. The only path to peace was autonomy for Nagorno-Karabakh within Azerbaijan.[1]

Of Azerbaijan, writing a decade later, Furman – a frequent visitor to Baku, where he had many Azeri friends – was at pains to dwell on the positive side of the record. Contrary to the expectations of prejudiced liberal opinion, it was not Islamic nationalism but a popular front that led the overthrow of the corrupt communist regime in place after the Soviet break-up, and won democratic elections in 1992. Its victory had not been durable, because of the strains of the war with Armenia, and the strength of clan ties in Azeri society. But there was a prehistory behind it that gave hope for the future. Azerbaijan was the Muslim society with the longest history of European colonisation in the world, which in the aftermath of the Great War had produced an advanced democratic movement, giving birth to a short-lived independent republic, with a flourishing cultural life – press, theatre, even opera. With the return of the Aliev clan to power in 1993, authoritarian rule had been restored. But the country's chances of democratisation, Furman thought, were greater than in any of the Central Asian republics. Russia had a great deal at stake in a peaceful and progressive modernisation of the world of Islam, both because of the length of its borders with it, and the number of its citizens who were Muslim. Islamic fundamentalism was an illness of the passage to modernity, but it was a more epidermic, less dangerous variety than those Christianity had produced – fascism, Stalinism – in the 20th century. It was wrong to exaggerate its menace. The memory of Azeri democracy would not go away.

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Writing in 1997-98 about the two Slav republics to break away from Russia, Furman viewed them with the same temperate optimism. Ukrainians and Russians were brother peoples, but sibling conflicts were normal. If the Russian empire survived the First World War as the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian did not, that was because Bolshevik internationalism, which was genuine, held it together. Under Stalin, however the logic of an imperial space controlled from Moscow took over, and an earlier Ukrainian nationalism, never general but equally never extinguished, came to acquire a new intensity, becoming more anti-Russian than, say Estonian or Armenian nationalism, just because of the cultural closeness of the two communities. Here, less linguistically secure, nationalists needed to counterpose Ukrainian difference all the

more strenuously. The result was the construction of a mythology of diuturnal Ukrainian national identity, and a countermyth denying that the Ukrainians were in any way distinct in Russia. Where the regional context was most hospitable to an ideology of Ukrainian nationalism, it was capable of inspiring prolonged guerrilla resistance – by their own lights, Bandera's fighters put up a heroic struggle against Stalin's rule in Galicia, lasting into the 1950s. Elsewhere, Soviet industrialisation and urbanisation led to much unforced Russification, even as official policies promoted the Ukrainian language.

When the Soviet Union broke up, the power of national ideologies was fading across much of the world, and in neither Russia nor Ukraine were they truly strong. A pragmatic de-ideologisation was visible on both sides. Russian attitudes to Ukraine shifted from denial of its existence as a separate nation to denial of its right to join Nato – milder than Spanish attitudes to Catalonia or the Basque country, or France to Corsica. Tensions certainly persisted. Culturally, there was reluctance among many educated Ukrainians to study the language, since Russian was so much richer in literature and thought, a tendency resented by other Ukrainians. But if Russian culture was 'higher' than Ukrainian, and the Russian nation older, that was no more an intrinsic superiority than the difference in height between two individuals. Politically, on the other hand, Ukraine was more advanced than Russia. The parliament in Kiev had not been bombarded by tanks, or the constitution fabricated by and for one man. The country had no special authoritarian tradition, and no great power mindset. It was true, however, that the imperfect degree of democracy it had achieved rested on a balance in the country between sharply distinct regions: if all of Ukraine were like Galicia or all like the Donbass, it would be less democratic. Yet these divisions were also, of course, a source of destabilisation. The Crimea, a special case whose allocation to Ukraine by Khrushchev was so recent, was no doubt a wound to Russia. But there were grounds for hoping that one day its status might be as uncontroversial as a Euxine Alsace.

Belarus was an odder story, though in a sense less depressing than at first sight. No former Soviet republic was less ready for independence: to the vaguest, least national self-consciousness – a far cry from Scotland or Catalonia – independence came not as the fruit of a struggle, but as a shock from the outside, as too did the arrival of the market. Some republics – the Baltics – were well prepared for both; others in the

Caucasus or Central Asia just for independence. Belarus was equipped for neither. Ironically, its first genuine act of self-determination was the election of Lukashenko in 1994, the product of a popular reaction that owed nothing to either Moscow or the West, the revolt of the countryside and the least well-off against a thin liberal elite in Minsk. No one's puppet, Lukashenko then entrenched himself in power by every available means. Paradoxically, however, his authoritarian rule awakened for the first time a real democratic tendency in Belarus, while Lukashenko himself could not operate altogether without the market. His regime could therefore be seen as a phase in the evolution of the people of Belarus from an ethnic group to a self-aware democratic nation, whose relations with Russia could and should in the long run resemble those between Canada and the United States.

Where Belarus acquired independence without lifting a finger for it, Chechnya – which had autonomous, not republican status in the USSR – was denied it in a sea of blood. Writing in 1999, after the first Chechen war launched and lost by Yeltsin, and just before the second unleashed by Putin, Furman had no hesitation in comparing the struggle of the Chechens against Russia to the valour of the Greeks against the Persian Empire. What had made it possible, and was little understood, were the unique characteristics of Chechen society within the ethnic maze of the North Caucasus. Unlike the neighbouring peoples – Kabards, Ingush, Ossetians and the rest – the Chechens had no chiefs or lords of a quasi-feudal type. Chechen society was made up instead of an egalitarian system of warrior-peasant clans, whose values of freedom and equality spelled at once a defiant refusal to obey others and a propensity to engage in destructive conflicts over goods or honour – epic solidarity and anarchic rivalry. The Russian empire required a huge effort to conquer the Chechens, because there were no elites to co-opt as elsewhere in the Caucasus. It took a struggle of 75 years, from 1785 to 1859, to crush Chechen resistance.

When tsarism collapsed in the First World War, the Chechens rose up for their independence, and when the Second World War came, Stalin deported them en masse to Central Asia, where one out of every three died. Against this background, there was no chance that Chechens would submit to the Russian Federation that Yeltsin carved out of the USSR in 1991, while every full-status republic was getting independence automatically. If Russians found it difficult to understand why – Furman, typically, told his compatriots – they would do well to imagine themselves colonised by China

and deported to exile in the Gobi. However much they might come to appreciate the poetry of Li Bai and Du Fu, their deepest dream could only be liberation from Beijing.

After the successive catastrophes they had suffered at Russia's hands, every Chechen sought survival beyond the reach of Moscow. In the other autonomous republics, as elsewhere, there was a nomenklatura that had presided over the integration of local society into the Soviet system – intellectuals and bureaucrats who could now feather their nest within post-communist Russia. In Chechnya, deportation and repression had blocked this, preserving the tribal values and psychology of a clan system, and with it a warrior willingness to fight, kill and die that professors and functionaries would never have. After Yeltsin's consolidation of power in 1993, great power impulses in the Muscovite elite threw Russian troops into Chechnya. Completely unprepared for counter-insurgency and compensating for their lack of motivation with every kind of cruelty, they suffered a massive defeat at the hands of fighters scarcely more numerous than Russian generals.

But in a tragic dialectic, the extraordinary victory of the Chechens in war led to a terrible defeat in peace. All they gained in the battlefield was a devastated land and international isolation; and once the war was over, the anarchy of traditional Chechen society – its rejection of authority as such – reappeared. Order broke down as martial virtues became civil scourges. In a culture driven inwards, with little understanding of the outside world, Islam trumped secular nationalism but – itself divided between sufi sects and neo-Wahhabite rigorism – could not stabilise a community coming apart amid the postwar ruins. Furman was writing just as the second Russian invasion of Chechnya was in preparation. By the time his text was in press, war had broken out. He made just two predictions. If Chechnya was reconquered, avengers with bombs would arrive in Russian cities, and any normal democratic development in Russia would be crippled. Seven years of occupation later, Furman ignored 'the grimaces of international law' for which he had shown misplaced respect in Nagorno-Karabakh: it was now plain that in the longer run independence was the only workable solution.

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In his last years, the focus of Furman's comparative research tightened to the fate and future of democracy in the ex-Soviet republics. His two final studies, of republics at opposite ends of the former Russian empire, Moldova and Kyrgyzstan, were clearly chosen because each offered the spectacle of an unpredictable democratisation that

intrigued him. Moldova was marked out, in his view, by the most contradictory ethnic self-consciousness of any post-Soviet state. Romanian-speaking when it was conquered by Russia in 1812 and became the tsarist province of Bessarabia, it knew twenty years of integration into Romania between the wars, before it was re-annexed by Stalin in 1940 and restored to the USSR in 1944. Under Stalin, contact of any kind with Romania was held to an absolute minimum, Latinisation of the alphabet forbidden, and a slither of adjacent Russophone territory beyond the Dniester added to dilute the predominance of a Romance language. When controls were loosened under perestroika, the local intelligentsia – whose longer-term aim was irredentist, a reunification with Romania – joined forces with agrarian bureaucrats in an alliance at the forefront of republican breakaways from the Soviet Union. But once Moldova became independent, Transdniestria riposted with a declaration of secession from it, the local nomenklatura did not want to give up its prebends to Bucharest, and Moldovan society as a whole – now two-thirds Romanian-speaking – had across a century and a half become so habituated to separation from Romania that irredentism could muster no more than about a sixth of the electorate.

In this situation, with the intelligentsia still hankering for reunion with Romania, the Moldovan elite targeting the recovery of Transdniestria, and the Transdniestrian nomenklatura playing up the dangers of absorption by Romania, the local Communist Party under its capable leader Voronin – a *kolkhoznik* from Transdniestria – unexpectedly proved the democratic joker in the pack, winning two elections in succession with close to 50 per cent of the vote. Not social-democratic, but unrepentantly Leninist in ideology, it nevertheless fought off Putin's attempt to foist on Moldova an authoritarian presidency modelled on the Russian system, and brought stability to the republic, showing it could work even with reunionists. Three-cornered conflicts of identity proved in the event to be not an obstacle to but a condition of democracy in Moldova. It was a 'democracy by default', but one where parliamentary rules of the game looked as if they were being increasingly internalised.

Alone among the Central Asian republics, Kyrgyzstan had seen authoritarian rulers twice unseated in popular revolts, each time with a major rising in Bishkek, its capital, crowds storming the presidential palace: the first ousting the ludicrous Western pet and one-time physicist Akaev – the 'Jefferson' of his people for Strobe Talbott, the 'Kennedy of Central Asia' for the Clinton regime at large – on whose bald pate a

drunken Yeltsin once tapped out a melody with wooden spoons; the second his brutish replacement, the former economic functionary Bakiev. As in Ukraine, but more turbulently, the regional division of the country, between a nomadic but earlier conquered and more Russified, as well as more cultured and prosperous north, and an earlier Islamised and poorer, sedentary south, created difficulties for the entrenchment of a strongman, inevitably from one part of the country or the other, in neither of which was there any tradition of Russian-style reverence for rulers; clan ties tending to weaken central power too. The result was a cycle of rebellions in a society where it was easier to make an urban revolution than to hold a fair election. But with the overthrow of its latest oppressor, the chances of a democratic evolution had improved: the Kyrgyz leaders to emerge from it had learned some political lessons from the past, and introduced a parliamentary constitution – the only one in the region – with a unique provision, a ceiling of 65 seats out of 120 for the winner of any election, no matter the size of their vote at the urns. The Kyrgyz example was to be respected.[2]

It was the largest of all the post-Soviet republics that produced the most pregnant analysis in Furman's studies of the 'Commonwealth of Independent States' created after break-up of the USSR. Culturally and historically, there were vast differences between Kazakhstan and Russia. But politically, Kazakhstan was much closer as a type of regime to Russia than was Ukraine, whose cultural and social contrasts with Russia were by comparison slight. It was a general lesson: structure could predominate over culture – it was enough to consider the similarity of the apotheosis of their rulers in two such dissimilar societies as North Korea and Turkmenistan. What Russia and Kazakhstan shared was that each society was quite unprepared for the dissolution of Soviet power, both lacking either democratic experience or any clear notions of a good society, and fearing too much freedom. Such was the originating matrix of the 'alternativeless presidencies' each acquired at the outset of their post-communist development, which path-dependency had since reinforced. In his road to power and his exercise of power, Nazarbayev combined the traits and trajectories of Yeltsin and Putin, showing that much which looked contingent or arbitrary in Russia was actually lawlike and predictable.

From the beginning the Kazakh regime was more authoritarian than the Russian, and perhaps for that reason posted better economic growth in the 1990s. But it also faced, for a time, more robust opposition, since here – unlike in Russia – liberals and

communists made common cause against it. In the background, too, lay rivalry between the three *juz* – 'hordes' – into which Kazakh society was divided, the Junior and Middle resenting the dominance of the Senior horde that formed Nazarbayev's political base; and the problem of succession, which in these systems nearly always triggered conflict and a temptation among competing elites to appeal to the masses for support. What the Kazakh case made clear, however, was how post-Soviet regimes should essentially be classified. The key to a taxonomy was whether or not any rotation of power was possible in them. As of 2004 Furman thought Ukraine and Georgia might become countries where this could occur; in Russia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan it had not, though legal oppositions were permitted; in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan neither was on the agenda. The dominant pattern was a distinctive type of rule, the shame-faced authoritarianism of societies that could not live democratically, but also could not confess the fact, generating systems that pretended otherwise. These were – the first time he used the term – 'imitation democracies'. They were not ready for the real thing. In a moment of candour, Nazarbayev once said: 'We cannot create democracy. We can only sweat it out.' But there could be no smooth evolution from what was simulated to what was genuine. Democracy required the fall of these regimes.

Their common origin, Furman argued, lay in a widespread fear of anarchy across the space of the former USSR, generating an anxious popular demand for the reimposition of order. That brought to power strongmen who, while preserving a façade of it, neutered democracy in similar style. The pattern was more or less invariant: conflicts between president and parliament, in which the former crushed the latter; proclamation of a new constitution to seal the victory of the winner; manipulation of electoral procedures and rigging of votes; then privatisation of public assets to consolidate autocratic power, distributing these not to the former nomenklatura but to outsiders dependent on the ruler (often enough Jewish, as in*Hofjuden* of old: the Berezovskys and Khodorkovskys), with little or no chance of creating a mass following. These were systems that emerged where conditions were not ripe for democracy, but no ideological alternative to it existed. Their stability was illusory, for they lacked any feedback mechanism to signal either social change or the erosion of their legitimacy by corruption and repression, moments of danger typically coming when electoral fraud became so blatant that it provoked mass demonstrations, as in the 'colour revolutions' of Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan. But these were possible only in relatively mild

variants of imitation democracy. In tougher – Uzbek or Turkmen – versions, real revolutions more like the Iranian would be necessary to overthrow the dictators in place.

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Where did Russia fit into this typology? In 2010, Furman set out his view of its long-run political development in a work whose title – *Dvizhenie po spirali*, 'A Spiral Movement' – is a semaphore of its argument. Across half a millennium, Russia had known three political systems: tsarism, communism and imitation democracy. Each had traced the same structural path, which could be modelled as a lawlike progression from infancy through maturity to senility. In a first phase, corresponding to the epoch of Ivan IV and the Time of Troubles in the construction of the autocracy, and the Civil War to Collectivisation under communism, the system was still quite fragile, facing dangers that could have put an end to it; in a second, it had consolidated itself, and offered every outward sign of stability (say, from Poltava to the Holy Alliance, or High Stalinism); in the last, it declined into an enfeebled sclerosis – from Crimea to Father Gapon, or the twilight era of Brezhnevism. In a far briefer span of time, imitation democracy was repeating the same cycle: vulnerable infancy in the chaotic years of Yeltsin, stabilisation as a consolidated system with the arrival of Putin, and now symptoms of decay as society was starting to escape the regime.

Yeltsin's rule had been precarious because its social base was so limited: essentially younger political careerists for whom the change of regime offered rapid upward social mobility, elements of the former nomenklatura, bought off by the handing over of state assets to them, and the intelligentsia. As the most vocal prop of his system, however, the intelligentsia was not only numerically a weak force. Professing democratic values while clinging to a patently undemocratic regime, it was ideally and morally a broken reed. Casting off his early supporters and crushing his parliamentary opponents, Yeltsin entrenched his personal power, but the mass of the population remained anti-capitalist, and he could win even manipulated elections only as a known, rather than unknown, evil. Putin, on the other hand, acquired the support of all social strata in Russian society. In part, this was because of rapid economic growth fired by high oil prices after 2000; in part because he broke the oligarchs of the 1990s; in part because by the end of his reign, Yeltsin's odium was such that any successor was bound to be more popular.

Russian liberals found the concatenation that led from Yeltsin to Putin as difficult to acknowledge as Bolsheviks had the evolution from Lenin to Stalin. But Putin was not the creator of the Russian system of imitation democracy; he simply completed it. His second-term presidency was its golden age: Chechnya reconquered, parliament tamed, oligarchs become dependents, media under control, no serious opposition parties, fast economic growth, entry to the G8. No tsar or general secretary had ever enjoyed such power in society based so little on fear. But this apogee was not a function of any personal attribute of Putin, who was no more responsible for the Russian economic growth of the period than Aliev or Nazarbayev was for the still faster growth of the Azeri or Kazakh economies. Nor had it staying power. Already by 2008, the system was beginning to irritate people, and look less functional. Central Asian rulers could perpetuate their presidencies by invoking the menace of Islamic fundamentalism, claiming as their merit the newfound independence of their countries, and paying scant heed to Western opinion. But for Putin to do the same required a constitutional change that risked undoing the democratic façade of the system and abandoning its claim to belong to the comity of Europe. So instead Medvedev was put in the Kremlin as a placeholder. But his liberal gestures were few and inconsequential, merely confirming the impression that the system had reached its limit and was starting to undermine itself.

Essential to its legitimacy was preservation of an illusion of electoral choice. But as the regime evolved, its elections became ever more fictive, even as society became increasingly aware of the fiction, emergent generations ever less deceived by its façade. Within the system itself, moreover, negative cadre selection set in. At its outset, strong characters and adventurers of every stripe – from Sakharov to Zhirinovsky, Lebed to Berezovsky – could emerge and make their mark. But once it stabilised, the career paths of its functionaries produced weak characters, Chernenko-like nullities of the lowest moral-intellectual level, as ever tighter control at the top eliminated potential rivals, yielding the crop of Putin's 'vegetables' below. This was a much quicker process than in the Soviet system, in part an extension of the final degeneration of the latter – though even late Soviet bureaucrats had often started out with some ideal motives that were now non-existent, the only glue holding the system together having become corruption. At the first sign of danger, this stratum would jump ship. So de-ideologised had the final levies of the Soviet elite become that they put up virtually no resistance to

the anti-communist revolution of the 1990s. The same would be even truer of the post-Soviet elite, whose only drive was personal enrichment.

Ideologically, the early phase of the post-communist system possessed some semblance of coherence, in its claim to be 'returning to the civilised world', even as its actual movement was towards an alternativeless presidency. But once that was in place, it could posit no further goals. It could neither claim to be an ideal order for Russia, nor concede that it was merely a temporary makeshift. Self-preservation alone, in a pyramid of patron-client networks, supplied its motive force. Words and deeds no longer bore any relationship to each other. The ideology of the regime was a garbled mishmash of ersatz traditionalism (principally Orthodox Christian) and a cult of Soviet stability and might (not revolution or socialism), hailing tsarist and KGB gendarmes alike as statesmen, television channels depicting Komsomols as heroes in one programme and Lenin as a maniac in the next. So too, in the absence of any ideological coherence such as the Soviet system even in its decadence had possessed, the regime's foreign policy lacked any consistent vocabulary or motivation. There could hardly be a struggle for the global triumph of imitation democracies. The result was a diplomacy whose course could only be impulsive and irrational.

This brittle, ageing organism was bound to enter into crisis. The least painful exit from the regime of imitation democracy would be a self-dismantling of it from above, of the kind Gorbachev had attempted of the Soviet system. But whereas he could enhance his position and popularity by launching perestroika, any comparable initiative by Putin or his successors would involve weakening their personal power by permitting an opposition capable of ousting the regime, psychologically unthinkable for them. The best that could be hoped for in this direction would be a split in the elite and swift surrender to the street, as Shevardnadze had capitulated in Georgia. But colour revolutions of that kind presupposed the existence of a strong legal opposition, which the Russian variant of imitation democracy excluded. The likelihood was that the very stability of Putin's rule would, on the contrary, precipitate some disaster for the country, as the stability of tsarism had in 1917, and Brezhnevism had in 1991.

The life cycle of the post-communist system was moving, Furman concluded, towards its inevitable end. Transition to a genuine democracy might follow it, with a society that had been further modernised, and the rise of a generation no longer fearful of power, but – much as the generation of the 1960s had taken the absence of terror for

granted – one that took the freedoms gained since 1990s for granted, and wanted more. In such a scenario, the spiral would move upwards, Russia's third attempt at democracy at last succeeding. But deep psychic traits of traditional Russian society – fright at disorder, submission to power – persisted alongside more modern ones, and there was a danger that its elites could turn their coats with a sudden switch to the new order, as in 1991. Rather than a successful exit, there might be yet another democratic failure, as so often in the past in Latin America. But, in the long run, an exit would come.

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There remained a large further question, however. The chances for Russian democracy as a political system were one thing, its framework as a territorial state another, though they were certainly interconnected. Furman's prospecting across the long arc of ex-Soviet republics around Russia had given him the conceptual tools for understanding the character of the post-communist regime in Moscow. But beyond their affinity at the level of structure, how should their relations at the level of power be viewed? Five years before *Dvizhenie po spirali*, Furman had devoted a long essay to the history and future of the Russian empire, a subject to which he returned in his last major article before his death. These two reflections form the necessary pendant to his account of the spiral of political development within Russia itself.

Here Furman's starting point was also comparative, this time with Europe. There, in the 19th and early 20th centuries, the creation of a nation-state had been the normal pattern of historical development. It could be called an entelechy of the time. The rise of democracy and of the nation had gone together, the right to self-determination taking its place alongside the right to freedom of expression and association and the expansion of the suffrage, as common dimensions of popular sovereignty. The unification of Germany and Italy as nation-states, followed by the break-up of the dynastic empires of the Habsburgs and the Ottomans, were characteristic examples of this process. Nothing like this, however, occurred in Russia. There the entelechy of the nation went missing, and even today the link between democracy and nationality had not crystallised. Russian self-consciousness remained caught in an imperial cocoon. Viewed historically, Russia was a multi-ethnic empire long before it acquired even a proto-national identity – the very term *Rossiya* being a late Petrine invention. Its elites were defined first and foremost by their ties to the dynasty, not ethnicity, and among

its subjects Russians enjoyed no special rights, indeed could have lesser privileges than others.

So when a Russian nationalism eventually emerged, unlike the national movements of 19th-century Europe or those of other ethnicities within the tsarist empire, its hallmark was the pursuit of two incompatible goals, the creation of a purely Russian government and the preservation of the empire. That stamped it as reactionary from the start. For it could never appeal to democratic principles, as every other nationalism under tsarism could, since these spelled the dissolution of the empire. On its side, the tsarist regime could only view Russian nationalism with reserve, since its appeal was not to dynastic loyalty but ethnic identity, and its claims were a provocation to other subjects of the empire, fanning their own national feelings. But though the tsars and their ministers saw the dangers of Russian nationalism subverting unconditional loyalty to the house of Romanov, once confronted with the still greater danger of revolutionary socialism they found some use for it, and gradually accommodated to its expression in the Black Hundreds. Still, a basic tension between the two persisted down to the end of the autocracy.

If, unlike its Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman counterparts, the Russian empire survived the First World War, it was paradoxically the committed internationalism of the Bolsheviks – in the Civil War, Reds were a lesser evil than Whites for non-Russian nationalities – that preserved it. Lenin's detestation of Great Russian chauvinism was well advertised. Deliberately, the state the Bolsheviks went on to build – the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics – lacked any territorial or ethnic markers. Beneath the designation, of course, the reality was constitutively ambiguous throughout. Alone among the Soviet republics, the RSFSR had no party or academy of its own, yet its demographic weight ensured Russian dominance of the union as a whole, in a hierarchy that was always unequal. In the 1930s, script and teaching in sister republics were Russified; yet at the same time, local languages were fostered, and a panoply of institutions created local elites and built cultural identities in them. This was still an imperial system, expanded by Stalin from the Baltic to the mouth of the Danube after the Second World War, and padded by control of Soviet satellites in Eastern Europe. But over time, as the 'socialist camp' divided and contracted – Yugoslavia, Romania and Albania in Europe, China and North Korea in Asia, peeling away from Moscow – and ideological energy drained from the CPSU itself, the pattern of late tsarist

ambivalence re-emerged. In the Brezhnev period, Russian nationalism was once again both politically suspect and an ideological resort as the legitimacy of communism frayed, even as – this was the difference with tsarism – indigenous bureaucratic and intellectual elites were strengthening their positions in the outlying republics, over which the centre was insensibly losing control.

Perestroika struck this decreasingly coherent order a sudden sideways blow, unintended and to the end uncomprehended by its author. Gorbachev was acutely aware that the Soviet Union was ill, but the totalitarian system he inherited blinded him to the nature of its infirmities, like a doctor trying to cure a patient without knowing anything of his body. Revival of Leninism proving impossible, the vacuum left by Brezhnev's 'period of stagnation' could only be filled by the two ideologies closest to hand – democracy and nationalism. Welcoming after his fashion the first, Gorbachev was disconcerted by the second, which caught him completely by surprise, as it should not have done, since in the non-Russian republics the one was a natural concomitant – as it had been in 1905-6 – of the other. Confronted with national movements whose aims he rejected, he drew back from repressing them by force, as in contradiction with democratic values he accepted. Hamstrung by the ensuing tension in his attitude towards the new wave of nationalisms, Gorbachev failed to develop any responsible policy towards them at all.

Into the gap he left, Yeltsin moved without scruple, using Russian nationalism as a battering-ram to bring him down. Without playing on the resentment against the all-union structures of the USSR that had never given Russia the pride of place to which its primacy entitled it, Yeltsin and his supporters could not have gained the mass support they needed to capture power in the RSFSR, as the trampoline for overthrowing Gorbachev. Though their use of Russian nationalism was purely instrumental, it had the consequence which the monarchy of old had always feared: it undermined the Russian empire. That too became in turn a means for finishing off Gorbachev, with the deal in the Belovezhskaya Forest that brought the USSR to an end, and his presidency with it. In Russia, liquidation of the union without any popular mandate for it had two disastrous authoritarian effects. Yeltsin and his group could fear that they might be prosecuted for treason should they ever lose power, and so fortified themselves all the more rigidly in it. At the same time, popular fears that disintegration of a familiar world might go still further justified a ruler with an iron

hand, if the country was not to fall into complete chaos. The road from the hunting lodge in Belarus led to the butchery in Grozny.

Humiliation in the first Chechen War was avenged by Putin in the second, and his regime could acquire a real mass base as a government saving Russia not only by crushing separatism and bringing order and prosperity to society at home, but restoring the country to its rank as a great power in the world at large. Russian nationalism could now for the first time become, overtly, the leading ideology of the state in a way it never could before. What were the implications for the imperial projection of the country? Though there was now a considerable Russian diaspora in ex-Soviet republics, Putin's government was careful not to fan irredentism, for fear of a backlash among the non-Russian minorities of what was officially proclaimed not a multicultural, but a multinational federation – in reality, a unitary rather than a federal state; not to speak of the risk of counter-reactions in the peripheral republics themselves. The drive of the regime was towards not territorial expansion, but the re-creation of an imperial space in the shape of a zone of influence, sweeping across the 'Commonwealth of Independent States' nominally linking most of the former Soviet republics.

In this design, Russia was not without some resources. Its economy was much larger than that of any other member of the CIS; it possessed a long-standing military and bureaucratic apparatus, where other states had to create these from scratch; the culture of the post-communist elites in these republics often remained quite Russified; among local audiences, Russian television continued to be popular. There was also a natural affinity between the rulers of the various imitation democracies, who in a domestic crisis would tend to look to Moscow for support. All this gave Russia a number of levers for meddling in the affairs of its neighbours. But none of them wanted to be dominated by Russia, and though the CIS might at times have looked like a Holy Alliance of authoritarian presidents for their mutual protection, any inter-authoritarian integration of these regimes was no more practicable than schemes of Arab unity had been in the Middle East. For Russia itself, moreover, the CIS – whose running costs it paid – yielded no material advantages: its importance was essentially psycho-symbolic, as an after-image of empire.

Thus although, Furman commented in 2005, Putin's regime looked stable and in command of its environment, the 'rise' of Russia it trumpeted would be a very limited

one, in time and space. The population of the country was declining; its mineral resources were finite; its cultural development was stunted; its control of rebellious regions was often nominal; it lacked any ideological power of attraction. The Orange Revolution in Ukraine had just broken the cordon sanitaire of imitation democracies around the regime in Moscow. A new Russian crisis lay ahead. Writing five years later, Furman was yet more pointed. The lesson of 1917 and 1991 was that any move towards democracy in Russia brought separatism to the surface as an inevitable by-product of free elections. In the 21st century, that meant the prospects were either disintegration of the 'mini-empire' of the Russian Federation, with a further shrinkage of its territory, or another rejection of democracy and suppression of separatism, driving its explosive charges deeper underground.

The independence of Chechnya and other allogenous communities, however, would not be a loss but a gain for the people of Russia. For what the country needed was a synthesis, long overdue, of national and democratic consciousness. Russia lagged behind Europe, entering its phase of modern national construction just as Europe was exiting it for another entelechy, of supranational development. Russia could not skip this stage, but it should be a short one, leading to entry into the EU. That might seem a fantastic notion today, but so did a peaceful dissolution of the USSR and adhesion of several of its republics to Nato yesterday. The Russian empire would then finally come to an end, and Russians would simply live in their national home as the French or the Swedes in theirs.

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How, finally, should the particular trajectory of Russia be situated in a wider perspective? It was plain, Furman thought, that some logic or order existed in world history – it was not mere Brownian motion, but a patterned development. There was no way back from agricultural or pastoral to hunter-gatherer societies, just as literacy and the state could only come from the former, and contemporary forces of production emerge from their predecessors. However, not only the Marxist model of five successive modes of production but any such schema was untenable, because, as Popper had shown, human creativity is such that we cannot know in advance what we will know in the future, so the very basis of our evolution is in principle unpredictable. In 1900 who could have guessed the course of the 20th century?

Today, scientific and technical knowledge is accelerating at an ever faster pace. Paradoxically, however, the resulting acceleration of unpredictable changes in our world is something we can predict. The increase in our knowledge since the scientific discoveries of the 16th and 17th centuries makes that certain. Historically, one such advance was on a broader scale than any particular breakthrough. That was the discovery of the conditions necessary for the constant achievement of ever new discoveries – a form of society that not just contingently allowed for creativity, but was structured to give it room. The name of that society was democracy, and it would give birth to a second paradox. Politically speaking, Confucian China was a highly stable society. So too, from its birth to the present, has been US society. Unlike imperial China, however, the US was an open society from the start, programmed for continual, unpredictable economic and social change as knowledge evolved. Yet for an indefinite future nothing could be more strikingly predictable – David Runciman would arrive at the same observation in these pages some years later – than the regularity of American elections (*LRB*, 21 March 2013). So, Furman concluded, though the 21st century would be more unpredictable than the 20th in every other sphere of life, in the constitutional sphere it would be more predictable, as the growth of knowledge diffused the political forms conducive to it. There was no way of knowing how Russians would dress, eat, live, work or fear in the future, but it could be predicted with some confidence that they would choose their rulers at the ballot box, take decisions by a majority and guarantee the rights of the minority.

The growth of scientific and technical knowledge, widening our possibilities of living, was an objective process. But for social forms to emerge corresponding to it, changes in consciousness were required, accustoming people to the continual appearance of the new. When alterations of knowledge were minimal, dogmatic religion had prevailed. In more dynamic conditions, dogmatic religion softened into weaker, more ephemeral ideologies promising earthly happiness. But by the end of the 20th century, these had faded – their remnants in North Korea, Iran or Afghanistan were like the survival of Stone Age tribes in New Guinea. So in Russia by 1991 there was no serious ideology left – only a vague market-romanticism, a noisy but insubstantial chauvinism, an eclectic traditionalism, all equally incapable of arousing the passion and dedication of socialist, anarchist or proto-fascist sects of old. De-ideologisation, a product of the tempestuous growth of knowledge, transformations of family life, de-dogmatisation of morality,

continuous novelties in art, had set in. The revolution to come in Russia would be more sober than that of 1991, as that of 1991 was more sober than that of 1917. It would promise neither communism nor consumer prosperity in a trice, just the simple idea that rulers should depend on voters.

Was this merely a Western perspective? All discoveries, Furman observed, have a singular – individual or social – origin, but if they are significant advances, they become all-human. Inuit could not invent agriculture, but they now watch TV and sit in a parliament in Greenland. Societies that make important discoveries enjoy an initial advantage, but that is no grounds for conceit, since diffusion eliminates it. Literacy, mathematics and the state came first in the Near East, India and China, not in Europe. The principles of democracy originated in Western Europe, but in their appropriation lay a kind of entelechy in the development of any human society, which could only achieve political stability, even if a long and violent transition was typically necessary to attain it, by rooting them in its own soil. That passage was always particular to the society concerned, each of which had its own legacies to adapt or surmount. If China was at home with social mobility, but not political or ideological pluralism, and India the reverse, Russia had to contend with the opposing burdens of Orthodox obscurantism and Petrine reformism, driving a lasting wedge between elites and masses.

These were real difficulties, but it was wrong to exaggerate Russian exceptionalism. The October Revolution had been original, but the country's current lack of success in creating a democracy was entirely unoriginal. Russians needed to take a more matter-of-fact, less neurotic look at themselves. Compared, not unrealistically to England or France, but to other societies at a similar level of development, the position of Russia appeared rather average. In the coming century, it could not avoid the passage to democracy. That would not occur overnight, but by 2050 it was more likely that Russia would have ceased to exist than its imitation democracy would still exist. Ahead lay a third, inevitable attempt to create a real one.

The advent of democracy would not make people happier. Any human achievement, Furman observed, brings temporary satisfaction, but that soon passes and the balance of happiness and unhappiness typically remains unchanged. After years of sharing cramped and inconvenient quarters on the outskirts of Moscow, he was delighted when he finally got a comfortable modern flat in the city. But the euphoria soon passed, and

in time nostalgia for the woods, the neighbours and his youth began to colour memories of his earlier accommodation. So it would be when democracy was achieved in Russia. There would be pride and elation at the first free elections, but it would not last long. For future generations, the Soviet system would be as remote as tsarist autocracy and serfdom were for his own, a past they might look back on with a certain romantic nostalgia, as a time when people believed in something, had strong characters, and didn't have to worry about Aids or global warming. For them democracy would lose its glow, becoming a dry routine, as no doubt more difficult tasks confronted them. If it was the only adult way of living, adults are not necessarily happier than children. They may often look back with regret on childhood, but they can never revert to it.

Furman's last two books, *Dvizhenie po spirali* and *Kirgizskie Tsikly*, were written when he was dying. In 2008, he was diagnosed with motor neurone disease. After learning he had not long to live, he scarcely talked of it even to friends, until by 2010 he could hardly move, a solitary finger tapping the keyboard slowly to the end. His final months were lived as political speculation in Moscow turned to the presidential succession: would Medvedev achieve a second term or would Putin return to the Kremlin? Furman had little time for Medvedev's slogan of 'modernisation', the pursuit of which, he remarked, was as old as Russian backwardness itself, and inseparable from it – typically, the country's modernisers had merely reinforced its backwardness. To live in freedom required no special modernisation campaigns.

Still, a continuation of Medvedev and his weak talk of the rule of law and a place for the opposition was preferable to the re-enthronement of Putin, which would seal the decadence of the Russian system created in 1991. Should Putin decide to take the presidency once again, the regime would be heading for a Kyrgyz, Tunisian or Egyptian outcome, and Putin the fate of a Bakiev or Ben Ali, at the hands of a real – not a colour – revolution. Furman wrote this in February 2011. He was dead by July. Within six months, the scenario he had predicted as the most dangerous for any imitation democracy, the explosion of protests over too blatant a rigging of elections, had come to pass in Moscow. The reaction of the regime, escalating nationalist rhetoric and police repression, was what he would have expected. So too its fall-back to less educated and poorer layers of the population, on the outskirts of big cities and in the provinces, as its reserves of support – the mobilisation of periphery against centre that

had once brought Lukashenko to power, and might preserve Putin's rule for a time. Nor would he have been surprised by the subsequent *fuite en avant* in Ukraine, yet without full throttle for irredentism in the Donbass. They accorded with the logic of preserving an imperial space, to which Russian nationalism had always been committed.

Furman's last two texts were valedictions. In the roll-call of Russian rulers, Gorbachev had been unique. Ordinary moral rules had no bearing on traditional conceptions of power: Catherine II and Alexander I were accounted great rulers, though one killed her husband and the other his father. To try to judge Gorbachev by these standards was like complaining Malevich lacked verisimilitude. He was the only Russian ruler who voluntarily limited his own power, and in six years freed a multitude of peoples whose conquest had taken centuries and countless lives. Future generations would understand, as his contemporaries did not yet, that he was the best thing in Russian history. Sakharov, whom he freed, had shown another kind of greatness, not of ideas, but of integrity. Psychologically too far from the masses – the nomenklatura was closer to them – and too idealist and doctrinaire to be a political leader, he was a voice of conscience, a figure who in 1989 was still calling for land to be distributed to peasants, factories to be handed to workers, and all power to be returned to the soviets. Could he ever have supported Yeltsin's privatisations and the shelling of the Duma, as his widow, Elena Bonner, did? He was lucky enough to die before having to witness them.

While he was alive, Furman could – after perestroika – publish as he wished: if few of his compatriots shared his outlook, no text of his was ever refused. But there was no engagement with his ideas either; they were too unconventional. The major statement of his account of Russian political development in the 20th century, *Dvizhenie po spirali*, met with complete silence. He received scarcely a telephone call after it came out. Knowing how little time he had left, he was discouraged, but felt no real surprise. Since he died, there has been a change, as friends have written of their memories of him, and with his family have created a website where most of his writing has become available. But his output was prodigious, with many still uncollected pieces. Any systematic consideration of his work has yet to come – no easy task, given the exceptional shape it took, unifying in a single compass the structure of most of the major religions, the broad sweep of Russian history since late tsarism, detailed tracking of the politics of post-communism across the whole space of the former USSR,

and macro-sociological reflection on directionalities in world history. Few are qualified to pronounce on all four.

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Confronted with a body of work of this scope, some observations can be ventured at its edges. Furman's comparative analysis of world religions was broken off before he could arrive at Buddhism, as he doubtless otherwise would have done. But a more significant gap may be the absence of any sustained treatment of Catholicism, determined perhaps less by lack of time than tilt of interpretation. Unlike Weber, who contrary to his popular image was active in Protestant circles in Germany, Furman had no religious connections. His attitude to faith in the supernatural was detached, free from either apology or hostility; he would have agreed with the simple definition of it by Martin Riesebrodt, the most level-headed recent sociologist in the field, that religion is essentially an appeal to superhuman powers to avert misfortune, overcome crises and furnish salvation.[3] That did not preclude admiration for the Reformers and their legacy. For Furman – an emphasis he shared with Weber, though his construction of it differed – Protestantism was the advance guard of Christianity in modern times, as it gradually shed its doctrinal integument. Sensing a temperamental affinity, a friend once termed him a secular protestant. That may have deterred him from proportionate attention to the Church of Rome, whose ductility in modern times would have presented another kind of analytic challenge.

More generally, Furman could be taxed with overestimating the significance of Protestantism, not so much in the spiritual genesis of capitalism, as in the particular combination of political stability and economic dynamism he attributed to the United States, neglecting the material endowments of American society, in the size and resources of a continent cleansed of its native inhabitants and protected by two oceans. Likewise, when looking at the former Soviet republics around Russia, he tended to pick out religious-cultural backgrounds as the most important factors differentiating less from more authoritarian systems, the Lutheran and Catholic Baltic states at one end of the spectrum, Orthodox and Muslim at the other, though in this case he was careful to add that these could not be separated from other, geographical and socio-economic legacies. What is clear, however, is that it was the enabling framework of his studies of religion that supplied the heuristic impetus for his subsequent writing on lay affairs, in two senses.

For Weber, the critical connection between them lay in the emergence of capitalism in the West, at a time when only Japan had reproduced it. By the time Furman was writing, in an all but pan-capitalist world stretching across the zones of every major confession – all, from Shanghai to Delhi, Bangkok to Dubai, Tel Aviv to Lima, happily paddling in the waters of capital – this was a problematic that had ceased to be actual: another reason Weber's legacy has fallen into abeyance. For Furman, with a much clearer sense of the impetus of diffusion in any significant discovery, the more significant question was now the differential relationship of religion to the eventual gestation of democracy, and the conditions of its spread across the world. That was not an issue for Weber, a liberal whose ruling political passion was an imperial nationalism. But if the optic through which Furman chose to view religion was a preparation for his shift to modern politics in general, it also gave him a quite particular purchase on Russia. For there he could project his vision of the immanent logic in the trajectory of any religion onto the development of communism, and map its sequel in the light of it.

In the hands of its customary users, treatment of communism as another religion, the worst imaginable, was a standard trope of the Cold War. In Furman the analogy had none of this ideological freight. Its direction was, if anything, the opposite. Because from the beginning, even at school, he viewed the Soviet system matter-of-factly as one more faith in a world composed of several, and went on to study these with a calm curiosity, without either devotion or rancour, once he applied the same instruments of understanding to it, he did so in the same cool, unillusioned but not unsympathetic spirit. He was aware that he was himself in some measure formed within this system of ideas, whose lessons were one of the reasons he never made of the analogy a simple identity. Marxism had its scientific side too, and could explain the demise of the order which its conversion into a doctrine of state had created, as the outcome of a structural transformation of society to which no literal religion had ever given rise.

The parabola of Russian communism had also, of course, to be set in the longer *durée* of the country's history. In the West, the two exemplary ways of dealing with the relation between the short Soviet century and what preceded and succeeded it have been either to stress the permanence of Russian incomprehension of liberty or property, fear of disorder and attachment to autocracy, extending unbroken from tsarist through to post-communist times; or, on the contrary, to treat the October

Revolution and the regime it founded as a disastrous fruit of the contingent outbreak of the First World War, cutting short what would otherwise have been the country's natural evolution – already under way – to a liberal democracy whose unfolding was happily resumed at the turn of the century: Richard Pipes and Martin Malia the emblematic spokesmen of each. Furman's construction avoided these alternatives. The strength of his conception of a 'spiral' peculiar to Russia was to link repetition and innovation in a single historical movement that was still open-ended. The result was a view of the end of the Soviet Union, and what has emerged since it dissolved, distant equally from Pipes's bleak diagnosis and Malia's eupeptic assurance.

In the day-to-day articles he wrote after 1991, Furman could like any commentator make misjudgments, sometimes of over-optimism; that, he was ruefully aware, was the price of analyses on the run. But overall, what stands out are the acuity and balance of his assessment of political developments across the next twenty years. He rarely personalised them. His portrait of Gorbachev is an exception, the more affecting because he so clearly saw the weaknesses of the politician he most admired, if he did not dwell on them; but it was written after Gorbachev fell. Similarly, his disgust with Yeltsin as a figure was expressed with all bluntness only after he had left the stage. Furman's verdict on Yeltsin's regime, however, was clinical from the start – a world away from the shameless hagiographies of Harvard and the American Enterprise Institute. Putin it was pointless to demonise; he had essentially developed a political system his predecessor had designed, and could be expected to go down with it. But if that system was Russian, it was not only Russian. The imitation democracy of the 1990s stretched from Minsk to Bishkek. It was a sui generis product of the period.

There was one obvious limitation at the beginning of this analytic of the time, and less conspicuous, an oscillation towards the end of it. In Furman's account of the failure of perestroika, he identified both an underlying absence of social carriers for it as a project and a number of political shortcomings in Gorbachev as a leader of it. Missing, however, is any due sense of the economic collapse of the USSR after 1987, which was in no way inevitable, but the result of Gorbachev's haste and incompetence as a ruler, dismantling the party that held the Soviet economy together as an interconnected system without any idea of what to put in its place, and so pitchforking society into the disastrous shortages and inflation that led to the disintegration of 1991. The extent to which mutations in power – changes in representation and repression – would in

succeeding years continue to be affected by graphs of production is underplayed in Furman's depiction of them.

The oscillation lay in his estimate of the readiness of the peoples of the former Soviet Union for democracy. The Russians submitted to Yeltsin, whom they mostly disliked or despised, because they feared chaos more than they wanted freedom. That was a judgment very close to the opinion of Pipes, and it was not just confined to the 1990s. Furman expressed much the same sense of the deep psychic traits of Russian society towards the end of his life. On the other hand, he never altogether recanted the view that there had been a moment of opportunity for a path to a genuine, rather than imitation democracy during perestroika, before the fan of possibilities closed, and often observed that those who had grown up with the fake version were not going to settle for it, wanting nothing better. But a certain distrust of his fellow countrymen never left him; he was not a patriot, as he pointed out. When he considered the former Soviet republics around Russia, on the other hand, the generous impulse behind his engagement with them could lead him, conversely, to an unduly optimist reckoning of their degree of readiness for democratic life – Moldova, Kyrgyzstan, Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, all falling short of hopeful prognostications he offered at one time or another. There, too, bracketing the economic conditions of political systems came at a certain cost.

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More significant, however, was a wider ellipsis. Missing from Furman's vision of his country was one fundamental dimension of its landscape. There was little or no sense of the pressures and ambiguities of Russia's geopolitical setting. This was not a simple blindness on his part. Rather, it was a resistance. 'He did not like the word "geopolitics", lowering the world to the level of a chess game played by its sovereigns,' his Azeri friend Togrul Dzuvarly wrote after his death. In part, no doubt, this was a reaction against appropriation of the term in the neo-imperial fantasies of Russian conservatives like Dugin or Prokhanov. But it also came from the difficulty of squaring a problematic so single-mindedly centred on the requirements and hopes of democracy as an internal regime, with the implications for them of the external coexistence of states of vastly differing magnitudes and interests. Weber, hailing German participation in the Great War, invoked the objective geopolitical position of his

country in a world where 'the mere existence of a great power, such as we have become, is an obstacle in the path of other great powers,' as rendering it inevitable:

The fact that we are a people now of seventy millions – *that* was our fate. It founded an inexorable responsibility before history that we could not evade even if we had wished. We must make this clear again and again, when the question of the "meaning" of this endless war is now raised. The magnetic force of this fate drew the nation upwards, past the perilous abyss of decline, onto the steep path of honour and fame, from which there could be no turning back.

Such intoxication, common on all sides in that period, was unthinkable for Furman. But in turning away from attention to the inter-state system of his own time, he risked an opposite form of myopia, in which realities of power bearing on the questions that most concerned him could not be adequately registered.

There was a further reason for that. What is absent from Furman's account of the trajectory from Gorbachev to Putin – held outside the frame – is the part of the West in shaping it. Politically, he was reluctant to look steadily at this. He described himself as in Soviet times an unconditional *zapadnik*, and to the end the United States and Western Europe remained a positive reference point as liberal democracies. Did that mean they played a constructive role in helping towards the growth of democracy in Russia? Furman never directly confronted the question. Gorbachev, it was true, had become too taken with his trips to the West, and the flattery and not always intelligent advice he received there, to the neglect of the mounting crisis at home; and Yeltsin had received more support from the West than he deserved. But these are asides in Furman's writing, which fails to take due measure of the destructive impact of Western arrogance and meddling in Russia.

From Washington's expansion of Nato to Russian borders in violation of promises not to do so, US involvement in shock therapy and corrupt privatisation, fulsome diplomatic backing for Yeltsin's bombardment of the Duma and faking of the constitutional referendum, injection of IMF funds to secure his re-election, endorsement of Putin's obliteration of Grozny, down to the latest round of Western sanctions and America's bid to retain nuclear superiority, the attitude has been consistent: Russia is a defeated power, whose rulers are to be sustained if they comply with Western requirements, and punished if they do not. Before he died, Furman saw that a weak version of the Cold War was coming, but took it as the last gasp of an

empire he knew, rather than the collision of more than one, from which he looked away. The future of Russia lay elsewhere: one day it would find its place in the European Union without much more difficulty than Poland today. There, his realism deserted him. The vastness of the country – its size and location alone – preclude such an analogy. Such factors are not to be mystified, in a Weberian idolatry; but nor can they just be ignored, Furman-style. Disliking the notion of geopolitics does not make its bearings go away.

Furman remained unwilling to register the imperial drives of the US or the EU, out of a continuing, if unaccented, *zapadnichestvo*. But if the West was an ideal horizon for him, it was also a rather remote one. The fixation of so many Eastern European intellectuals of his generation on the West, a passionate longing for the embrace of Brussels or Washington, shared by Russian liberals, was foreign to him. He was not prepared to stare too long at what the White House or the Charlemagne Building might be up to abroad because they presided over democracies at home. But he was not greatly interested in them as models for Russia, which was socially too distant from them. The country which commanded his admiration as an example for his own was India. This was a consistent thread in his writing, from the time of perestroika onwards, when he hoped the CPSU under Gorbachev would lead the USSR towards a stable democracy as Congress had done in India – ruling benignly for at least another decade or so with a popular mandate, won in an open parliamentary system yielding the rule of a dominant single party. In due course he came to the conclusion that such a prospect was illusory for Russia, without seeing the element of illusion in its image of India. He had an acute understanding of the confessional foundations of Indian democracy, and Congress hegemony within it, but that did not exempt him from idealising them. Had he been an Indian, he would have written of Kashmir or Nagaland as he did of Chechnya. From afar a veil of indulgence fell over Delhi and its dealings, that at closer range never, and with good reason, protected Moscow.

These were foibles. The real difficulty with Furman's prospectus lies in the electoral minimalism of its conception of democracy. His analysis of the nature and logic of the imitation democracy that emerged from the ruins of the USSR remains exemplary. But the stark clarity of his definition of it implies a misleading antonym. How automatically real is a democracy that is simply its negation – a system where elections bring alternative rulers to power? By the end of Furman's lifetime, the corruption and

involution of the political order in Europe and in America had become obvious. Yet since polls continued to be held, and governments to vary, there was no place for these in his scheme of things, let alone for any idea of a democracy deeper than quadrennial, or still less frequent, visitations of the ballot box. Furman had no great affection for capitalism; in Russian terms he was 'slightly leftist'. But in putting it aside, to all intents and purposes, in his concern with democracy, he failed to consider what might become of the one in the grip of the other, or to wonder what other kinds of democracy a society of equals in more than a vote would involve.

The sign of this blind spot is the matter-of-fact analogy to which he again and again recurred. Democracy was no recipe for human felicity, it was just an arrival at maturity. But to cast political systems as social equivalents of individual growth, even if only for persuasive purposes, as he was fond of doing, is to invite the obvious question: what then of the next stage of the organism – senescence? That there must be degeneration at the end of a life cycle follows from the image, but is suppressed by it. Metaphors are not on oath, and there is no sense in pressing them too closely. In less figurative mode, Furman used two other terms to convey his vision of the spread of democracy, and directionality of world history. One was Aristotelian, the other Soviet Marxist. There was an entelechy in the first, and a*zakonomernost'* – 'lawfulness' – in the second. For conventional opinion in the West, where teleophobia – Sanjay Subrahmanyam's caustic coinage – has become a sine qua non of intellectual respectability, there could scarcely be a greater scandal than reversion to the former. The prejudice can be ignored, but the usage does not quite serve its purpose. For if, as Furman also contended, the emergence of the nation-state in 19th and early 20th-century Europe had every sign of an entelechy, which had since given way to another, supranational one, democracy in the form he understood it could presumably be overtaken in its turn as well. *Zakonomernost'* is less stringent, and Furman's conviction of it as the existence of a set of delimited historical regularities, more acceptable at large. What is clear, in any case, is that this heirloom of Soviet culture was a productive spur to the systematically comparative cast of his life's work, which would have been less overarching and imaginative without it.

It is difficult to think of any contemporary intellectual figure comparable to Furman. In Russia there was no one like him. After his death one of his friends, taxing him with an excessive faith in progress, described him as a Soviet Victorian. But, he added, in

holding that Russians were closer to a self-standing democracy than their forebears eighty years ago, Furman was disproof of his own optimism. At the beginning of that century, the friend said, Russia possessed an outstanding constellation of liberals and democrats, for whom the words democracy and freedom really meant something. Now we had just Furman, practically alone. It is a judgment that could be extended. Originality of mind, purity of spirit, consistency of principle, and not least, lack of any hint of political conformity: in the West, now enlarged to Russia's borders, how often are they to be found together? It is enough to think of leading candidates for the term 'liberal' – take any long list of those bedizened with official or commercial honours: political, literary, academic – to realise how vanishingly small is the number who merit the critical respect it could once inspire; as for 'democrat', let alone besmirched with a capital letter, it is better not mentioned. Furman, who never swam with any tide, preserved the dignity of both.

[1] Furman's writing on the conflict at the time, influenced by his apprehension that its impact could only create difficulties for Gorbachev's position in Moscow, and his dislike of anti-Muslim prejudice in the Russian intelligentsia, largely ignored its historical origins. In a later and fuller account, he would make some correction for this, admitting that the 'relatively illegitimate and randomly drawn border between Armenia and Azeria' gave Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh 'every reason to consider the embodiment of Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan to be an error liable to amendment'. The allocation of the enclave to Azerbaijan in 1923, violating Bolshevik promises that it would go to Armenia in keeping with the natural preferences of its population, was not random, however. It was a calculated move by Stalin to gratify the Kemalist regime in Turkey, whose diplomatic benevolence he sought.

[2] Furman wrote *Kirgizskie Tsikly* with Sanobar Shermatova, a courageous Kazakh journalist who died before the book was fully finished. It is no doubt to her that we owe the scathing portrait of Akaev, complete with the kinds of piquant detail that Furman generally eschewed.

[3] From *The Promise of Salvation* (2010). This calm work is genuinely comparative, though the aim of its comparisons is to demonstrate this definitional commonality of all religions rather than to determine the differences between them. Typical of Riesebrodt was his judgment that religion is not a necessary component of human culture and existence, but its disappearance was improbable, since natural misfortunes

and economic crises, not to speak of mortality, were unlikely to vanish in the century to come. But there could be no doubt of its fading grip in Europe, where the *Leitkultur* was 'no longer Christian but capitalist'.

Cultivating Their Dachas

Sheila Fitzpatrick

- *Zhivago's Children: The Last Russian Intelligentsia* by Vladislav Zubok
  Harvard, 453 pp, £25.95, May 2009, ISBN 978 0 674 03344 3

History has its moments of euphoria when people embrace in the streets out of sheer love for their neighbours, police horses are garlanded with flowers, and everyone understands that the old lies and repression are gone for ever. I'm not sure that these moments occur in Britain. Certainly they didn't in the Australia where I grew up in the 1950s, and as a result I'm always bemused when I hear them spoken about: do such things really happen in the world beyond? I'll never know because I always missed the moment. Khrushchev's Thaw was over by the time I got to the Soviet Union, leaving only the post-euphoria hangover. I could have been in Paris in the summer of 1968 but stayed in Oxford instead, writing my thesis. Then I went to America, but it was already the early 1970s, and people were turning 30 and taking the flowers out of their hair.

Vladislav Zubok had a similar problem. Coming to maturity in the Soviet Union in the late 1960s, he was in time for the collapse and disillusionment that followed the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 but not for the heady excitement that had preceded it, when reform-minded Soviet intellectuals looked forward to a Moscow Spring to match the Prague one. That cohort of Soviet intellectuals – 'Zhivago's children', as he calls them – were his parents' generation, not his; and this book, which he describes as 'not just a scholarly project', is his affectionate, often nostalgic tribute to them. It helps to know this – though the information is hidden in the acknowledgments at the very end of the book – because it not only explains who he is actually talking about but also accounts for an otherwise puzzling instability of tone between empathy and detachment.

The milieu of Zubok's parents was the Soviet intelligentsia, not its celebrity wing but even so the intelligentsia of Moscow and Leningrad rather than the provinces: 'television engineers … employees in the military-industrial complex … musicians,

artists … art historians'. These were people who had been students in the immediate postwar period, had hoped for much from the Thaw and de-Stalinisation in the 1950s, believed in socialism with a human face in the 1960s, read the reform-minded journal *Novy Mir*, had a passionate respect for high culture, and listened to the songs of the balladeers Bulat Okudzhava and Vladimir Vysotsky on their tape recorders. It's not a cohort defined by age because the postwar students included World War Two veterans born in the 1920s as well as school-leavers born in the 1930s. Nor is it a social group whose exact location and definition a sociologist could map. The subject of Zubok's book is a group of people with a shared worldview, shared assumptions and experience, a group more or less synonymous for practical purposes with the Soviet intelligentsia of Moscow and Leningrad in the 1950s and 1960s.

The remarkable thing about this group as Zubok presents it is that its members were socialists and Soviet patriots who were at the same time spirited, romantic, optimistic, inclined to non-standard thinking and confident about the future and the possibility of change within a Soviet context. Readers used to a division of the Soviet intelligentsia into 'party hacks', who mouthed Soviet slogans but didn't believe in them, and 'dissidents', the heroic challengers of the system who rejected socialism and Soviet values, may find the combination surprising. But both the socialist commitment and the belief in reform were crucial to the collective identity of Zubok's people. When they lost the first and were disappointed in the second after 1968, the whole imagined community collapsed.

'Zhivago's children', Zubok's coinage, is something of a misnomer for a group of optimistic reform-minded socialists who were proud of their country and considered themselves children of the Revolution. Neither Pasternak nor Zhivago was a socialist, an optimist or a Soviet patriot. What they shared with Zubok's group was a devotion to high culture and consciousness of descent from the Russian intelligentsia of the 19th century.

In the novel, Dr Zhivago is emblematic of the old Russian intelligentsia; in the imagination of many Soviet intellectuals of the 1950s and 1960s, Pasternak himself served this function. Along with Akhmatova, Nadezhda Mandelshtam and the medievalist Dmitry Likhachev, Pasternak was a survivor of the pre-Revolutionary intelligentsia who, after a period of eclipse and disgrace, was rediscovered by a younger generation in the mid-1950s. Some lucky or well-connected young intellectuals were

able to visit these figures semi-surreptitiously at their dachas, listen to their poems and stories of the past, and get a whiff of a vanished world of high culture and aristocratic manners. But those who, like Josef Brodsky, took this spiritual reconnection deeply to heart were exactly those who were unlikely to retain socialist beliefs or Soviet patriotism, thus marginalising themselves in the group whose story Zubok wants to tell.

It would have made more sense for Zubok to have called his group 'Lenin's children', or perhaps, in deference to the first Bolshevik Commissar of Enlightenment, Lunacharsky's. For it wasn't from Pasternak and Akhmatova that Zubok's people picked up those values of the pre-Revolutionary intelligentsia that are particularly relevant to his story – namely, optimism, revolutionary idealism and political engagement. As Zubok acknowledges, their Soviet schooling propagated 'ideals of self-cultivation and self-improvement, and the pervasive cult of high culture … once intrinsic to the ethos of the Russian intelligentsia'; as a result, it produced young people 'with intellectual curiosity, artistic yearnings and a passion for high culture' who 'identified not only with the Soviet collectivity but also with humanist individualism'. Zubok calls this result 'unintended', presumably because he wants to distance himself from any suspicion of Soviet nostalgia. In fact, it's one of the paradoxes of Soviet history that it was exactly the result that cultural leaders like Lunacharsky and Gorky, Stalin's chief theorist of culture, intended, however bizarrely those intentions may have coexisted with the terrorist practices of the Stalin period.

Whether they were Zhivago's children or Lunacharsky's, this idealistic group had an extraordinary capacity for repeated 'moments of madness', when the bright future for which they had longed seemed just round the corner. Over the quarter-century from the end of the Second World War to 1968 through which Zubok follows them, tears of happiness were shed on numerous occasions when it 'seemed that we would start breathing freely with one more push', that the time had finally arrived when 'people would begin to speak and think freely, and not a single scoundrel would be able to indict them for anti-Soviet speeches.' But tears of disappointment were equally frequent, when 'hopes … lay shattered,' when there were 'no more illusions and dreams of a better future'. These moments were each time attended by shock that the 'philistines', so recently routed, were once again in the ascendant.

Such idealism and naivety are often attributed to the Khrushchev period, when de-Stalinisation and the Thaw fired the enthusiasm of the young, when Sputnik and Gagarin's space flight made Soviet citizens proud of the country's scientific achievements, and Khrushchev promised that Communism would be achieved within 20 years. But Zubok departs from the standard story in dating the beginning of the time of hope to the late Stalin period, specifically the immediate postwar years in the universities of Moscow and Leningrad, when veterans mingled with students straight from school in an atmosphere of optimism and energy generated by their survival of a terrible war and pride in the Soviet victory. 'We not only thought, we firmly *knew*, that our country was the vanguard force of mankind,' in the words of one of them. Among the cohort, thirsting after knowledge and high culture, were poets like David Samoilov and Boris Slutsky, future 'enlightened bureaucrats' like Anatoly Cherniaev, and a young Communist with a bright future, Mikhail Gorbachev, and his future wife, Raisa, both students at Moscow State University in the first half of the 1950s.

Most accounts of the late Stalin period foreground the 'anti-cosmopolitan' campaign (both xenophobic and anti-semitic) and the disciplining of the cultural intelligentsia known, after its point man, the Politburo member Andrei Zhdanov, as the *zhdanovshchina,* but these events are peripheral to Zubok's story, since they seem to have left Zhivago's children – including the many Jews among them – strangely untouched. Zubok even notes that the*zhdanovshchina* had the positive side effect of giving the young 'a great appetite for forbidden cultural and intellectual fruits'. At a time when any sort of meeting in public remained constricted, young people of the postwar cohort developed the habit of gathering informally in private apartments to talk and listen to music and readings of unpublished work. Since dozens of people often attended, this was possible only because some of the students were from elite, politically connected families with large, luxurious apartments.

Stalin's death in 1953 brings us into the more familiar territory of the Thaw, the rollercoaster years of hopes and disappointments for the intelligentsia. Highlights of the period included Khrushchev's Secret Speech on Stalin's crimes at the 20th Party Congress in 1956, the Moscow Youth Festival in 1957 and the publication of Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* in 1962, or, before that, Vladimir Dudintsev's *Not by Bread Alone* (1956) and Yevgeny Yevtushenko's *Babii Yar* (1961). There were setbacks, too, including the scandal over the publication of *Dr*

Zhivago in Italy in 1957 and the attacks on Pasternak that followed. But in general the atmosphere among the intelligentsia continued to be buoyant and Zhivago's children remained socialists and Soviet patriots, 'reborn Leninists' who felt that the 20th Party Congress had given 'new life to the Communist experiment, by cleansing it of Stalinist anti-semitism and chauvinism'. *Novy Mir*, which is estimated to have reached between three and five million readers each month, though its subscription list was restricted by the Central Committee to 1.2 million, published a series of controversial novels and stories while also extending its discussion of history and current affairs, all in the name of socialism as well as sincerity and truth. The newspaper *Izvestia*, edited from 1959 by Alexei Adzhubei, Khrushchev's son-in-law, who was 35 when he got the job, pioneered a new style of 'honest' and lively journalism.

The story of the Thaw often ends in 1964, the year of Khrushchev's fall from power, or even earlier, but Zubok's perspective is broader. He is interested not just in the poets and novelists among Zhivago's children, or those eagerly read by them, but also in the natural and social scientists in the cohort and in the 'enlightened bureaucrats' who, back in the postwar years, had been their fellow students. It's unusual for a historian of Soviet culture to use this term (introduced into Russian history by the late Bruce Lincoln to describe the ministerial officials who in the 1840s, despite the conservatism of Tsar Nicholas I, managed to draft most of the great reforms implemented in the 1860s by his successor, Alexander II). Not only that, Zubok's practice is also at odds with the Russian intelligentsia's long tradition of categorically excluding 'bureaucrats' – that is, anyone holding an official state or Party office – from its ranks. But as scholarship on the postwar period develops, it is becoming increasingly clear that bureaucrats were no less likely than poets to be reform-minded (and a lot more likely to get their reforms implemented).

The early Brezhnev period was a highpoint of the kind of reform in which experts – economists, sociologists, demographers, cyberneticists – from Soviet 'think-tanks' collaborated with officials in the Central Committee and the ministries. The (unsuccessful) 1965 economic reform sponsored by Kosygin is a case in point, but there was such a buzz of activity across the social sciences that one sociologist later called it the zenith of 'the officially recognised role of the intellectuals' in Soviet society and policy-making. In the mid-1960s Zhivago's children – including these reform-minded social scientists – were still collectivists, despising the ethos of capitalism in

the West as well as the ‘materialism’ of much of the Soviet elite: they aspired to a purer as well as a more scientific socialism. Even the newly emerging ‘dissidents’ (human rights activists who had no access to the Soviet corridors of power) still shared these assumptions: as Zubok points out, the rights they advocated didn’t include the rights of private property.

Yet the collapse of these hopes was just round the corner. It came with the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968, which put an end to the liberalisation of the Prague Spring and was the beginning of ‘the long decline of Zhivago’s children and the death throes of their dreams’. For Zubok, socialist idealism was the group’s sine qua non: without it, ‘in the absence of that dream, the very idea of an intelligentsia in Russia began to seem like the figment of a naive imagination.’ Intellectuals in Moscow and Leningrad had welcomed the idea of socialism with a human face and hoped it would travel from Czechoslovakia to the Soviet Union. Extensive personal and intellectual contacts between East European and Russian reform-minded intellectuals made the invasion particularly bitter, yet as at every other moment of disappointment over the preceding ten years, the intellectuals caved in, with only a minority even signing letters of protest. They yielded to ‘the brutal force of the authoritarian state’, in Zubok’s formulation; but his account shows how little actual force was needed to bring Zhivago’s children into line. For all his sympathy with the group, Zubok has to admit that they ‘rarely lived up to the ethos and ideals of the old Russian intelligentsia’, regularly falling back into the bad habits of ‘conformism, cowardice, mutual denunciations, cynicism and hypocrisy’.

Given the regularity of the euphoria/ disappointment cycle, Zhivago’s children might reasonably have hoped that 1968 would turn out to be just a stop along the way rather than the terminus. It turned out otherwise, however; and the main factors Zubok pinpoints in one of the most interesting chapters of his book were the rise of a Western-oriented dissident movement, the growth of Russian national sentiment within the educated elite, and, above all, the Jewish emigration of the 1970s.

The dissidents were the small minority of Zhivago’s children who kept up their criticism of regime policies after 1968, but from the position of outsiders rather than, as before, quasi-insiders. Socialism quickly disappeared from their platform. Finding themselves shunned by the majority of the intelligentsia, they made little effort to win its support, let alone that of the broader population, and addressed their message

almost entirely to the West. The close association with Moscow-based foreign correspondents that ensued was interpreted by the KGB, as well as by many ordinary Russians, as treachery and collaboration with the Cold War enemy. In terms of Russian public opinion, it didn't help that many of the dissidents were Jewish, often very critical of the Russian national character (such comments as 'slavery is in the Russian genes' were often heard in dissident circles), or that the rights of non-Russian national groups mistreated by the Soviet (or Russian-imperialist) regime were one of their favourite political causes.

The counter-development of the 1970s, the growth of Russian nationalism, enjoyed considerable support at all levels of Soviet society up to the Politburo. Nationalism came in various forms, from a fascination among writers with the old Russian village to an anti-semitism fuelled by the possibility of Jewish emigration that opened up in the early 1970s, resulting in the departure of 200,000 Jews, including many members of the intelligentsia, in the course of the decade. From the Western point of view (expressed most vehemently in the US), the Jews were a persecuted people in the Soviet Union who should be rescued from their misery. In Soviet popular opinion, they were a privileged group (Zubok runs through the indices of Jewish over-representation in elite occupations) who were now being given yet another privilege for which nobody else was eligible: the right to emigrate. The emigrants themselves often cited fear of pogroms as their reason for leaving, but Zubok is sceptical: he thinks they were mainly worried about the educational and professional prospects of their children in the Soviet Union, as well as being disappointed with the prospects of socialist reform: 'Soviet Russia had seemed like the "Promised Land" to their grandparents and parents during the 1920s,' but now it 'had become a ruined utopia for them and their children. Why tolerate an uncertain future in which they and their children might be scapegoated for Soviet misrule by the growing number of Russian anti-semitic nationalists?'

With the end of the socialist dream, in Zubok's presentation, most of Zhivago's children simply gave up being interested in politics, deciding to cultivate their dacha gardens and enjoy their opportunities for foreign travel. In the place of socialism, new interests developed: Russian Orthodoxy and Zionism (sometimes pursued simultaneously by assimilated Jews); Zen Buddhism. People focused more on their private lives, drawing a sharper line between the public and private spheres. They

became more materialistic and developed a new vocabulary of cynicism. The age of enthusiasm was over.

There was, however, an unexpected postscript: the Gorbachev era of socialist reform at the end of the 1980s. In Zubok's definition, Mikhail and Raisa Gorbachev remained Zhivago's children, their socialist idealism untouched because of their two decades on ice in the provinces. When they returned to Moscow in 1978 on Mikhail's appointment to the Politburo, they re-established their old connections with social scientists and 'enlightened bureaucrats'. Critics and supporters alike saw parallels between Gorbachev's glasnost and the Prague Spring 20 years earlier. But perestroika came too late, in Zubok's view: the civic-minded intelligentsia Gorbachev had counted on as a mainstay was no longer there to be mobilised in support of socialist reform.

In assessing the significance of *Zhivago's Children* as an interpretation of Soviet cultural history, it is important to bear in mind that the cohort of Zhivago's children is Zubok's construction, and clearly reflects the particular experiences of his parents and their friends. He has generalised these experiences to cover the whole Russian intelligentsia (however that slippery term is defined), but other trajectories and experiences were undoubtedly possible. The late Stalin period was a time of hope for some, but not for those who fell victim to the anti-semitism of the period. The early Brezhnev period may have been exciting for well-connected reform-minded sociologists and economists, but it was miserable for Tvardovsky's*Novy Mir*. Many more such instances could be listed, though the point of an analysis like Zubok's is not that the experiences he describes are fully representative but that that they are grounded in individual experience and, most important, illuminate broader questions. If we accept that Zubok meets these criteria, what are the areas he most illuminates?

The first surprise is that for at least a quarter of a century the Soviet regime had an asset that is generally overlooked: a supportive and patriotic intelligentsia, a cultural elite enthusiastically committed to socialism. In other words, the Soviet regime appeared to have solved one of the major challenges that confronted it after the October Revolution: how to co-opt the intelligentsia as a partner, to make it a subordinate but supportive participant. Of course, the problem was not solved for ever, but even the 25 years Zubok claims the solution lasted is a pretty impressive achievement. Indeed, there would be an argument both for back-dating it to the mid-1930s (this is just an empty space in Zubok's analysis, presumably because his parents

had not yet arrived on the scene) and post-dating it into the 1980s, making the duration of the partnership closer to half a century.

How could this have happened? Zubok does not address this question, presumably because it is a given for him – a matter of simple observation – that his parents' generation were socialist idealists and patriots. But there is surely a clue in his emphasis on the Jewishness of many of Zhivago's children, the importance of which becomes visible when the cohort disintegrates in the wake of the Jewish emigration of the 1970s. This Jewish theme, building on and expanding the insights of Yuri Slezkine's *The Jewish Century*, is the second major area his account illuminates.[*] Many Jewish Communist intellectuals were just one generation out of the Pale: theirs was one of the two great upward mobility stories associated with the Revolution. No wonder Jews of this generation tended to be socialists and Soviet patriots.

The other great upward mobility story – unmentioned by Zubok – was that of workers and peasants (mainly Russian and Ukrainian by nationality) who, partly as a result of Soviet affirmative action policies in higher education in the 1920s and 1930s, made it into the elite and became first-generation administrators and professionals: Khrushchev and Brezhnev were both products of this process, as basically was the peasant's son Gorbachev, though he was too young to have been a formal beneficiary of affirmative action. These two sets of arrivistes, Jews and lower-class Russians, were the core of the new Soviet intelligentsia, and, unlike the old Russian intelligentsia, they thought of the Soviet regime as 'ours' rather than 'theirs'. In addition to their socialist commitments, both groups had a great respect for high culture and a desire to acquire it: they were Zhivago's children in this sense, accepting as they did the surviving members of the old intelligentsia as their teachers.

The third main achievement of Zubok's analysis is its abolition of the hard and fast dividing line – beloved of many Russian intellectuals, especially in post-Soviet retrospect – between 'intelligentsia' and 'bureaucrats', since Zhivago's children are both, and Gorbachev is one of them, which means that we finally have a back story for perestroika that makes sense. In the usual telling, Russian history has a long line of 'Tsar reformers', starting with Peter the Great and ending with Gorbachev, who got it into their heads that Russia ought to be changed and made the nobles go along with the idea. The reforming impulse is seen as Westernising, alien. But Gorbachev was a

Westerniser only to a limited extent, even if, as Mrs Thatcher noted, Westerners could do business with him. His real context was socialist reform, as understood by Soviet and East European intellectuals in the 1950s and 1960s, the time of his political and intellectual formation.

In the end those same intellectuals failed him, and Zubok has some harsh words to say about their impracticality, lack of vision, disloyalty, and the 'elitist and overweening' attitudes that led them to claim 'supreme authority over public morality and political matters' during perestroika. The intelligentsia turned out to be venal, seduced by (often illusory) prospects of individual betterment under post-socialism. They failed to appreciate the value of state support for culture and science and overestimated their own value on a free market. One of the big miscalculations of the intellectual elites at the end of the Soviet period was that a move towards capitalism would bring new and even better support, that 'the West out of gratitude would provide a new Marshall Plan for them.' It was a moral miscalculation, in Zubok's view, as well as an economic and financial one: they should have stayed true to the old Russian intelligentsia's commitment to 'serving the people'. (This last phrase is unexpected: Zhivago's children, in Zubok's account, may have been socialists, but they were also firmly embedded in a privileged elite that seems to have had as little to do with 'the people' as possible.) In any case, Zubok's conclusion is that they got their comeuppance: when they abandoned Gorbachev and perestroika, they 'sawed off the bough on which they were all sitting'; the end of socialism in the Soviet Union turned out also to mark the 'death of the Russian intelligentsia'.

In Zubok's telling, it is a sad story, almost a tragedy. Yet I sometimes found it hard to repress the thought that Zhivago's children not only enjoyed a nice life compared to the rest of the Soviet population but also had a lot of fun along the way. All those moments of boundless hope and tears of happiness! And even after the iron entered their souls after 1968, the joys of foreign travel were available as a recompense for lost idealism, all the sweeter because so long denied. One of the characteristics of Zhivago's children that Zubok fails to stress was their remarkable capacity for what Bourdieu called 'misrecognition', making them not only blind to their privileged position in society but also able to construe it in terms of virtue and moral leadership. Not least among the advantages Zhivago's children possessed was the ability to have their cake and eat it too.

Better to bend the stick too far

Sheila Fitzpatrick

- *A History of 20th-Century Russia* by Robert Service
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  Has 20th-century Russia a history? The problem is that Russia – or, to be precise, the Russian Federation – became a nation state, or something approximating to it, only after the collapse of the Soviet Union. For nearly seventy years (1923-1991), it was part of the Soviet Union; for the first 17 years of the century, it was part of the multinational empire ruled by the Romanovs. 'What was Russia? And what was Russia's part in the Soviet Union?' Robert Service asks in his introduction. But there are no answers to these questions, only – as is frequently the case in this rich but sometimes inconclusive work – a series of options. 'For some witnesses the Soviet era was an assault on everything fundamentally Russian. For others, Russia under Stalin and Brezhnev attained her destiny as the dominant republic within a USSR. For yet others neither tsarism nor Communism embodied the positive quintessence of Russianness.' Russia in the 20th century, Service tells us, was an entity with changing borders and a population only weakly and intermittently interested in being 'Russian', incorporated within multinational states whose leaders' attitudes to Russianness changed over time. Strictly speaking, it was not even 'Russia' that was incorporated, but a multinational 'Russian Socialist Federated Republic'. In a more literal sense than Churchill intended, Russia was 'a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma'.

  It is not the riddle of Russia that interests Service. It is the riddle of the Soviet Union and what came after it. For most of its length this book, despite its title, is really a history of the Soviet Union built on the classic model, privileging the Russian or Slavic part of the Union but not neglecting the rest, and focusing mainly on politics. The great strengths of Geoffrey Hosking's *The First Socialist Society* are cultural history and a feel for the texture of life; Ronald Grigor Suny's *The Soviet Experiment*, which also came out last year, is best at social history, the nationalities and historiographical perspective. Service's forte is political history in the tradition established by E.H. Carr in his multi-volume *History of Soviet Russia*, where politics means process rather than ideology, served up with generous portions of economic and international context and some garnishes of society and culture.

Service has, of course, made use of the opening of Russian archives. Over the past decade, secrets have been uncovered,'white spots' in the history filled in and new data on a multitude of topics have emerged. The provinces, long invisible, have come back into view. Political actors, past and present, have started to acquire personality and private lives, and ordinary people have acquired voices through the publication of diaries and oral histories. This makes it a difficult time to write such a history. It is still too early to assimilate the flood of information that continues to pour out in dissertations, monographs and scholarly articles, as well as in the Russian press. Old interpretations have been called into question but the shape of new interpretations has yet to crystallise. What happened to the Soviet Union in 1991 may be characterised as a revolution – not in the sense of a spontaneous popular movement overturning the old regime (which it certainly wasn't), but in the sense of an abrupt political, economic and ideological transformation as sweeping in its impact and implications as the Revolution of 1917 – and when a revolution occurs, national histories have to be rewritten. 'The history of the fatherland' is no longer feasible because the fatherland has ceased to exist. But it is not only Russians, Uzbeks, Georgians and Armenians who have to rethink their history in the light of 1991. All serious scholars of the former Soviet Union are undergoing a process of conceptual readjustment, just as physicists and biologists would be when confronted by a sudden influx of new experimental data, not to mention a new regime of experimentation.

There have been many different ways of understanding the longue durée of modern Russian/Soviet history. One view, popular among first-wave émigrés and now back in favour in post-Soviet Russia, was that the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 cut off promising trends of modernisation, Westernisation and democratisation, and plunged Russia into barbarism. In its crudest version (popular with Russian journalists in the early Nineties) Russian history from 1917 to 1991 was simply a black hole, an awful nothingness, an absence of history. Another familiar approach has been to see Soviet history as a passage into and out of Stalinism (otherwise known as totalitarianism). The classic questions of Sovietology in the Cold War era were how Stalinism came about, and how (or whether) the system would de-Stalinise. Historians, though generally allergic to the totalitarian model, were fascinated by Stalinism and tended to give it pride of place in their histories of the Soviet era. Some saw it as the real outcome of the Revolution; others, following Trotsky, as a 'betrayal'. Yet others saw it as the

product of a ‘wrong turn’ taken after Lenin’s death and/or the defeat of Bukharin and the Right. Our Whiggish instincts now send us sniffing in other directions.

In the Eighties, it seemed that a partially-deconstructed Stalinism – the ‘Brezhnev system’ – was going to be around for a long time. That made scholars interested in stability (which some called ‘ossification’) and look in history for its sources. Now, in the light of 1991, history is being scanned for the fault lines presaging sudden collapse. Since the non-Russian republics detached themselves so smoothly and spectacularly from Russia in 1991, a favourite searching ground is nationalities. ‘Civil society’ is another: it must have been emerging (we assume) in the Brezhnev period, and if it was, perhaps that was what quietly undermined the foundations and ultimately caused the house to topple.

The Cold War meant that Soviet history became a highly contentious field in the West. The usual way to understand the Sovietological conflicts of the late Seventies is in terms of politics and ideology, with totalitarianism as the touchstone. ‘Whitewashers’ and scholars ‘soft on Communism’ (in the terminology of their opponents) contested the totalitarian model; ‘Cold Warriors’ espoused it. The old conflicts still reverberate in the literary reviews, though they are long gone from the scholarly journals (see, for example, Timothy Garton Ash’s revival of the ‘Cold Warriors’ argument in his review of *Accusatory Practices: Denunciation in Modern European History, 1789-1989*, edited by me and Robert Gellately, *LRB*, 19 March 1998). These conflicts, however, were also generational, with a younger generation criticising the totalitarian model and an established older generation defending it. There were equally salient disciplinary issues. Social historians, just coming into their own in the field of Russian history twenty or so years ago, were almost invariably critical of the model for its implicit endorsement of the primacy of politics. Political scientists, whose discipline dominated the field in the Sixties and Seventies, tended to like the model for the same reason.

It has been said that scientific arguments are never won, it’s just that old scientists die. In other words, in intellectual arguments between younger and older generations, the younger generation has a natural tendency to win. That process was certainly very noticeable in Sovietology: if you were a revisionist in the US debates of the Seventies, as I was, you had the gratifying experience sometime in the Eighties of noticing that the halls were suddenly filled with young social historians who seemed to have been born revisionist. For those on the other side of the debate, of course, this outcome was

less gratifying. It infuriated anti-revisionist stalwarts like Martin Malia and Richard Pipes, who consider that in 1991 their side won the Sovietological argument along with the Cold War, and that this victory should be duly acknowledged.

Malia's complaint that he has been marginalised in an academic field whose members refuse to address the 'big questions' is not entirely without foundation. The now middle-aged revisionists, busy working in the newly-opened archives, are not listening and probably don't intend to. Those who came of age during perestroika or the post-Soviet era and regard archives and fieldwork opportunities as a birthright are not listening either. They believe the old totalitarian v. revisionist battles belong in the history books, and that what matters is the new archive-based history that is now being written.

The revisionist historians were mainly foxes, in Isaiah Berlin's division between the fox who knows many things and the hedgehog who knows one big thing. But hedgehogs were quite the wrong animal to choose to exemplify the 'one big truth' squad. It may be that the brain of the hedgehog works in the unitary manner Berlin suggests, but temperamentally the image is inappropriate. Hedgehogs are small, shy, prickly, apple-eating animals, uninterested in forcing others to agree with the one big thing they know. In the annals of human thought, however, not least its Sovietological branch, those who hold to one big truth are quite unlike the mild hedgehog: they tend to be absolutists for their truth, crusaders and polemicists, before whose passionate denunciations of error empirical foxes quail and relativists retreat.

Robert Service is a fox: not a revisionist (though he may once have thought of himself in those terms) but an empiricist, and as little of a Whig as can reasonably be expected of a historian. His method is to divide the historical period into segments that have some internal coherence and show the processes at work within them. Not surprisingly, this makes for a history that is like a string of different beads. Transitions are sometimes awkward: 'The times were a-changing,' we read at the end of Chapter Two, on the fall of the Romanovs, 'and hopes and fears changed with them.' But the periodisation is generally successful, avoiding the pitfalls of a 'sequence of reigns' approach (Lenin, Stalin, Khrushchev and so on). The five parts of Service's book cover the late Imperial period (1900-1917), the early Soviet period (1917-1928), high Stalinism (1928-45), late Stalinism and post-Stalinism (1945-70), and the late Soviet period (1970-91). The most interesting choices here are the breaks at 1945 rather than

1953 (Stalin's death), and at 1970 rather than 1964 (Khrushchev's fall) or 1982 (Brezhnev's death). The first is an excellent decision, since World War Two is undoubtedly the great watershed in Soviet history: the war and Soviet victory provided a new foundation myth that in the last forty years of the Soviet era largely overshadowed the earlier myth of the Revolution, and Second World War veterans moved into a position of dominance in the Party and its leadership that they retained, remarkably, almost to the end. The second allows Service to run his postwar story (Part Four) through the perils of partial de-Stalinisation and their resolution, leaving a story for Part Five that runs from the stability/stagnation of Brezhnev's 'developed socialism' to the collapse of 1991 and its immediate aftermath.

The Civil War and NEP chapters are excellent, as one would expect from someone who has written a three-volume biography of Lenin and a monograph on party organisation during the Civil War. Using new data on the secret Tenth Party Conference, Service shows that there was deep opposition to the NEP within the Party and a degree of determination and political ingenuity on Lenin's part only suspected until now. And it is a relief to have the overworked trade-union controversy of 1920-21 put in its place as a red herring. His sketch of Lenin – 'cleverer than all of them, including even Trotsky' but 'the hard Old Man of Bolshevism on political questions' – is particularly vivid.

The three big turning points in Service's story are 1917, 1928 and 1985-91. The first is handled somewhat perfunctorily, though Service avoids the crushing sense of inevitability that often attends accounts of the Revolution. As for the third, he stresses the irony that Gorbachev, 'in trying to prevent the descent of the system into general crisis, proved instrumental in bringing forward that crisis and destroying the USSR'. He strikes a slightly jarring note, however, with the speculation that, without Gorbachev, 'almost certainly the eventual collapse of the order would have been much bloodier than it was to be in 1991'. (How on earth can we know?)

On the introduction of full government planning and the first Five Year Plan in 1928, Service's account is less satisfactory: it is unclear why Stalin decided to launch a new upheaval, or even if that is the right question. Service gives a list of causes and enabling circumstances, ranging from the 1927 grain procurement crisis to 'administrative malaise', 'poverty, ill-health and illiteracy' and 'military insecurity'. But why launch a new revolution at this point, having barely survived the first one? Why complicate the industrialisation drive by throwing in collectivisation, which was bound (in the eye of

any rational outsider) to alienate the peasantry? Why make collectivisation more difficult by accompanying it with an onslaught on village priests and churches? Why target engineers for harassment and intimidation in the Cultural Revolution of the late Twenties just when their services were needed most?

Alec Nove wrote, apropos the Bolsheviks' decision to collectivise, that while a rabbi might have the choice between a cheese sandwich and a ham sandwich, this would not be a real choice for him. In other words, ideology counts – in this case, a genuinely revolutionary ideology and the militant, optimistic, ruthless spirit to put it into practice. The ideology and militancy were the Party's, not specifically Stalin's; leaders who counselled moderation ended up on the losing side, as Bukharin and his allies found out. In a popular phrase of the time, it was better to bend the stick too far than not to bend it far enough. Service treats the key decisions of the late Twenties as Stalin's decisions, which is too simple, and explains Stalin's actions largely in terms of political manoeuvre and circumstance ('There was an internal logic to the step-by-step choices that he made'). This neglects the blatant illogic of policy-making at this period, the lack of (and even contempt for) realistic planning, the ideological fervour that made Communists desecrate graveyards and blow up churches.

It is both Service's strength and his weakness that he shies away from models, theories and over-arching schemes. He is eclectic in his approach to the 'classic' interpretations of Soviet history. The Mensheviks were right in claiming that 'Lenin distorted socialist ideas.' 'Berdyaev for his part was right to argue that the USSR reproduced pre-Revolutionary ideological and social traditions.' But as E.H. Carr and Barrington Moore insisted, the Soviet leaders 'were also authoritarian modernisers', and Leonard Schapiro and Merle Fainsod were 'overwhelmingly right to underline the unprecedented oppressiveness of the Soviet order in its struggle for complete control of state and society'.

Some of these insights are closer to Service's heart than others – Berdyaev and Barrington Moore were 'right' but Schapiro and Fainsod were 'overwhelmingly right'. It comes as no surprise to find that the totalitarian model, though failing 'to encapsulate the contradictions' of Soviet reality, is better than any of the alternatives. Service's main reservation is that Soviet reality was 'extremely chaotic', defeating the state's efforts at totalitarian control. 'Administrative informality and disarray – and even gross disorder – as well as hyper-orderliness were basic features of life in the

USSR throughout its existence … The various impediments to total political control were not so much inhibitors of the system's existence as part and parcel of the means by which the system managed to sustain itself.'

Service's conclusions are suggestive. 'The Bolsheviks,' he writes, 'aspired to economic competitiveness, political integration, inter-ethnic co-operation, social tranquillity, administrative efficiency, cultural dynamism and universal education. But the means they employed inevitably vitiated their declared ends.' There were advantages (or, as the Soviets themselves used to put it, 'achievements') to Soviet Communism, among them the fostering of education, respect for high culture, and support for science and sport. Service acknowledges a Soviet civilising mission, and even sees it as partly accomplished – especially, he notes in an odd aside, in the modernisation of the 'obscurantist life of the Russian countryside' (shades of Marx's 'idiocy of rural life'). Winning the war against Germany was a major achievement, and in the postwar period Soviet rule came to mean a basic welfare state safety net which 'offered a peaceful, predictable framework for people to live their lives'. But politics was brutalised under Lenin and Stalin, internal enmities and alienation fostered among the population. The Soviet population became 'a mass of intimidated citizens who took little interest in their neighbours' welfare', with selfishness 'more endemic even than under capitalism'. In the summation of one of the last volumes of his history, Carr wrote: 'Seldom, perhaps, in history has so monstrous a price been paid for so monumental an achievement.' For Service – as for most historians of the post-1991 era – the price remains monstrous, but the achievement has lost its monumentality.

On the Banks of the Tom

Sheila Fitzpatrick

- *Memoirs of Peasant Tolstoyans in Soviet Russia* translated and edited by William Edgerton Indiana, 308 pp, £25.00, September 1993, ISBN 0 253 31911 0

Leo Tolstoy was not only a great writer but also a passionately outspoken public moralist in the Russian prophetic mode followed a century later by Alexander Solzhenitsyn. A political presence because of his impact on public opinion, he steered clear of direct political involvement. He was above politics. 'On the one hand,' Lenin wrote of him in 1908, 'we have a remarkably powerful, direct and sincere protest

against social lies and falsehood, while on the other we have the Tolstoyan, i.e. the washed-out, hysterical cry-baby known as the Russian intellectual, who publicly beats his breast and cries: I am vile, I am wretched, but I am morally perfecting myself; I do not eat meat any more and now feed only on rice patties.'

It was not Tolstoy's intention to found a movement. All the same, one emerged, in Russia as in other parts of the world, around the turn of the century, attracting those who shared Tolstoy's asceticism, vegetarianism, pacifism, renunciation of privilege, communalism, and his sense of the special virtues of peasant life and labour. In Russia the prime movers were Tolstoy's friend and disciple, V.G. Chertkov and I.I. Gorbunov-Posadov, editor of *Posrednik*(the *Intermediary*), to which before the Revolution Lenin's wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya, contributed articles on progressive education. The organisational centre, in so far as the Russian Tolstoyan movement ever had one, was the Moscow Vegetarian Society, founded in 1909 under the chairmanship of Gorbunov-Posadov. On impressionistic evidence, the experiences of the First World War won more converts to Tolstoyanism – or to a quasi-Tolstoyan disgust with the barbarism of war – among Russian soldiers. But then came revolution. In February 1917, the old regime fell. In October, the Bolsheviks seized power.

Bolshevism and Tolstoyanism were scarcely natural soulmates. But they were not necessarily antagonists either, or so it seemed in the first years after the Bolshevik Revolution. Lenin's wife was not the only Bolshevik intellectual to have cordial relations with some of the leading Tolstoyans. The same was true of V.D. Bonch-Bruevich, an expert on the history of Russian religious dissent who was both a close friend of the Tolstoyan Chertkov and a friend and sometime secretary of Lenin's: indeed, it was true of almost all the 'soft' Bolshevik leaders of the Twenties – men like Lunacharsky, the first People's Commissar of Enlightenment, Kalinin, the formal head of the Soviet Government, and Smidovich, who ran the Government's Office of Religious Affairs in the late Twenties and early Thirties.

As a result of discussions between Lenin and Chertkov during the Civil War, Chertkov's United Council of Religious Communities and Groups was authorised to review requests for exemption from service in the Red Army on the basis of religious conviction. The principle of conscientious objection was endorsed by the Soviet Government in 1919 – which did not, of course, mean that local Soviet authorities necessarily respected it. (Exemption for conscientious objectors was regularly

reaffirmed in laws and instructions up to 1933, but from the latter half of the Twenties such exemptions became increasingly rare, and the clause was dropped altogether in 1939.)

The Twenties were great years for anyone in search of ideas and precepts to live by. Such dreamers and truth-seekers might be either intellectuals or simple, uneducated people, and they might drift in the direction of the Tolstoyans or the Bolsheviks, or in each direction in turn. Young people who formed urban communes were as likely to be inspired by Tolstoy as by Marx (or by Marx as Tolstoy); and the enthusiasts who went to the countryside to form agricultural communes and collective farms included Tolstoyans and Bolsheviks.

To be sure, these Tolstoyan pioneers were a tiny minority, but they can be seen as part of a much broader trend of conversion to non-Orthodox religion confessions. These 'sects', as the Russians called them, made great headway in Russia in the first thirty years of this century. It was estimated that the membership of Western Protestant sects in particular quadrupled in little more than a decade between the Revolution and the end of the Twenties. For much of that time, the official Soviet attitude to Protestant sects – as distinct from the Orthodox Church under Patriarch Tikhon or, still worse, the Catholic Church – was generally positive. In 1924, on the initiative of Kalinin and Bonch-Bruevich, a national congress of the Communist Party even passed a resolution warning the Party's militant atheists not to put undue pressure on sectarians, since they had a real cultural and economic contribution to make to Soviet society, and moreover had suffered great persecution under the Tsars.

The Soviet regime's tolerance of Tolstoyans, as of so much else, started to erode in the late Twenties, and by the late Thirties had disappeared entirely. It was collectivisation, ironically, that destroyed almost all the sectarian agricultural communes that had developed in the Twenties, including some of the most prosperous and efficient collective farms in the country. The Tolstoyan communes were not among the economic exemplars, but all the same one of them, the Life and Labour commune at Shestakovka, led by Boris Mazurin, was among the few survivors: a deal worked out by Chertkov and Smidovich in 1931 allowed its members to move from Central Russia to Western Siberia, on the banks of the Tom River, and re-establish their commune there. Tolstoyans and some other sectarian communards were allowed to join the Shestakovka group in Siberia, and the new commune flourished until the beginning of

the Great Purges in 1936, when Mazurin and most of its leading spirits were arrested, and the commune was forced to merge with an ordinary kolkhoz.

Tolstoyans remained a proscribed and intermittently persecuted group, along with other religious sects, in the post-war period. But the Tom River commune had a brief and evidently serendipitous revival as a collective farm in the late Forties, when Mazurin's release from labour camp coincided with the need to rebuild the kolkhoz on a new location following a decision to start mining coal on the old site. That lasted until 1957, when the kolkhoz was turned into a state farm. There were fresh arrests of Tolstoyan 'counter-revolutionaries' in Moscow at the beginning of the Fifties.

Later that decade, other Tolstoyans, survivors of the arrests of the late Thirties, began to return from the labour camps, living quietly far from the capitals and generally isolated from fellow Tolstoyans. Of course, Tolstoy the novelist continued to be admired by generations of Russians, but the vast majority heard virtually nothing of Tolstoy the moralist, though in classes on Leninism and Party history schoolchildren would probably get to know what Lenin had said.

It was not until the Eighties that the first signs of a revival of interest in the Tolstoyan heritage emerged. A dissident journalist, Mark Popovsky, who had gathered a collection of Tolstoyan letters, diaries and memoirs, emigrated to the West and published (in Russian) a volume entitled *Russian Peasants Tell Their Story* in London in 1983. Then Arseny Roginsky entered the picture. Currently a leader of the Memorial society in the former Soviet Union, and for some years in the Eighties a prisoner in Soviet labour camps for the crime of publishing Soviet archival documents abroad, Roginsky compiled and annotated the first edition of Tolstoyan memoirs to appear legally in Russia: *Memoirs of Peasant Tolstoyans* (1989).

The present volume is a scaled-down English version of Roginsky's book. Professor Edgerton's introduction, drawing on Roginsky's more detailed end-notes, serves the purpose adequately, but leaves the reader eager to learn more about the strange history of the Tolstoyan movement in Russia in the first third of this century. For the time being, however, this desire is likely to be frustrated. Despite the fact that the former Soviet archives are now open, there are as yet no good scholarly studies in Russian or English of the Tolstoyan movement in the Soviet period or, more broadly, of Russian sectarianism since the Revolution.

It is only half-accurate to describe the memoirs in this volume as memoirs of 'peasant' Tolstoyans. Like the Tolstoyan movement as a whole, the memoirists represented here are a mixture of intellectuals who wanted to work as peasants and peasants who, with the help of Tolstoy's writings, had become autodidacts, 'intellectuals from the people'. In the first category come Boris Mazurin, the son of a Tolstoyan intellectual, trained as an engineer whose memoir in this edition deals with the Shestakovka and Tom River communes but not (as in the Russian edition) his labour camp experiences; and Yelena Shershenova, the daughter of a friend of Leo Tolstoy's and an alumna of the New Jerusalem and Shestakovka communes of the Twenties. In the second category come Dmitry Morgachev and Yakov Dragunovsky, born in 1892 and 1886 respectively, along with Dragunovsky's son Ivan, who in 1931 came with his father from a Stavropol commune to join the Siberian group.

There are memorable moments in all the memoirs. In Shershenova's account of the New Jerusalem commune, questions involving the upbringing of children loom large. Was a mother justified in devoting herself to her child, or did that necessarily detract from her commitment to the commune? Should the children live with their parents or in a separate children's house in the commune?

Several memoirists recall the problem of 'strippers', those communards whose Tolstoyan principles led them to repudiate even clothing. (This was not only a Tolstoyan problem: other memoirs of Russia in the Twenties mention strippers who seemed above all interested in shocking the bourgeoisie – and the Communists.) The issue of hand-farming – that is, farming without the use of draught animals so as not to participate in animal exploitation – is also recalled by some of the memoirists, with varying degrees of approval.

Boris Mazurin, the dominant figure in both the Shestakovka and Tom River communes, comes across as a highly practical man, more pragmatic and less inclined to anguished self-examination than many of the Tolstoyans. Hand-farming, for example, went a bit too far for Mazurin. His practical qualities kept the two communes afloat and no doubt had something to do with his survival after 1936. Yet even Mazurin had his spiritual side. It was with great pain, he writes, that he heard himself described in the labour camp as a man with a 'crafty look' (almost certainly intended as a compliment). Perhaps he had acquired that look, he conceded, but it was a mark of how much he had lost when he was dragged out of the peaceful isolation of the

commune and into Soviet reality. ‘This was the principal content of our life in the commune – life with our eyes and hearts wide open to all of God’s world, living life to the fullest, without any crafty look.’

In the two long peasant memoirs, Margachev’s and Yakov Dragunovsky’s, the acquiring of Tolstoyan illumination is inextricably linked with the First World War and the authors’ experiences on the battlefield. Particularly vivid is Dragunovsky’s juxtaposition of a horrifying battle – ‘death … flying, roaring and exploding all around me’, men buried alive in the trenches, heads and limbs shattered – with a moment away from the human world: ‘Here beside us, above a little stream in the forest, a nightingale poured forth its silvery notes and trills all night long. In the backwaters of the stream, the frogs were croaking away, and they too appeared to be undisturbed by the senselessness of men.’

Morgachev’s memoir includes a fascinating account of the unusual childhood and youth of a peasant orphan who, with his brother, received a substantial inheritance – 32 acres of land – from his grandfather; and both he and Yakov Dragunovsky provide descriptions of courtship and marriage that will be of considerable interest to students of the peasantry. Indeed, the subject of women, particularly wives, is a real preoccupation in Morgachev’s writing. The problem, in his experience, was that women were incapable of rising above individual and family interests to appreciate communal principles, and as a result, the commune kept being pulled down to their level. ‘I don’t know whether I am right, but all that has left within me a feeling of bitterness and lack of respect toward women, even though I know they are not all like that: there were some who could be considered equal comrades in our work.’ Alas, Morgachev’s own wife was not one of these. Though they lived together for almost sixty years, much of the time in communes, she never shared his principles and Morgachev, for his part, ‘felt cramped’ by the narrowness of family life.

Like Mazurin, Morgachev was arrested in 1936 and spent ten years in labour camps. Perhaps the most eloquent statement in the book about the Tolstoyan experiments of the Twenties and Thirties is his appeal (or demand) for rehabilitation, sent to the Prosecutor of the USSR in 1976.

We created a large agricultural communist economy, without any ‘mine’ but with everything in common, ours, without putting it off like the Communist Party till some time in the future. We did it right then, at that time, and we paid very dear for it with

the lives of commune members. Very few friends and followers of Tolstoy are still alive. We were cruelly beaten for that peaceful, human ideal. Such an unparalleled commune in the Soviet Union ought to have been taken under the protection of the law as a model communist farm. But only a few rare animals and birds are under the protection of the law. I am a fortunate man! I am still alive after being arrested in 1936 … I never admitted any guilt, since I had committed no crime, and I never signed the protocol of accusations. I accepted the teachings of Leo Tolstoy in 1915 during the First World War, and I have adhered to that ideal doctrine for sixty years. All men are brothers. I will take this teaching with me to Eternity … Now I am 84 years old. Forty years have passed since my arrest, and thirty years since I served my sentence in the camps. I request that you rehabilitate me before I leave for Eternity.

Dmitry Morgachev was officially rehabilitated, along with Mazurin, in January 1977. He died the following year.

Reasons for Not Going Back

Sheila Fitzpatrick

- *In War's Wake: Europe's Displaced Persons in the Postwar Order* by Gerard Daniel Cohen
  Oxford, 237 pp, £22.50, December 2012, ISBN 978 0 19 539968 4

  'The magnitude of the problem is such as to cause the heart to sink,' a member of the Fabian Society wrote in 1943, contemplating the hordes of uprooted people who would need resettlement when the Second World War was over. The International Labour Organisation estimated that 30 million had been 'transplanted or torn from their homes' since the beginning of the war. When it ended the Allies found themselves coping with eight million displaced persons (DPs) in Germany alone. Their handling of the problem, together with the two UN relief organisations, UNRRA and its successor, the IRO, has to be accounted a great administrative success, despite the discovery at war's end that a substantial minority of the DPs did not want to go home. Six to seven million were repatriated anyway, willingly or unwillingly, to their countries of prewar residence in Eastern Europe, including the Soviet Union, before the year was out. The large-scale epidemics that had been feared were avoided, as was mass starvation. The refugees' material situation, once they were registered as DPs, was significantly better than that of the surrounding German population. The 'last million' DPs, who'd spent

up to five years in DP camps throughout Germany, Austria and Italy, were finally dispatched out of Europe to new homes in distant places: North America, Latin America, Australia and Mandate Palestine.

People had various motives for refusing repatriation, reflecting the different situations that had displaced them from their countries of origin. A relatively small cohort of Jewish survivors of the Nazi concentration camps was soon joined by a much larger group of Jewish 'infiltrees': refugees from Eastern Europe, the majority former Polish citizens who had survived the war in the Soviet Union, then been repatriated to Poland, but soon fled westward because of the anti-semitism and material privation they found there. No attempt was made to repatriate Jews from Central Europe to their countries of origin: it was acknowledged from the beginning by all the Allies, including the Soviet Union, that some other solution would have to be found. Of a total of about a quarter of a million Jewish DPs, a sizeable group were (or became) Zionists and ended up in Israel, the foundation of which in 1948 was not unconnected with the need to find them a home.

Poles formed the largest DP cohort, numbering about 400,000. The government wanted their nationals back (except for the Jews), but as it became clearer that Poland was going to be a Soviet satellite, the DPs became increasingly unwilling to return. Reports of chaos and poverty at home, compared with the relatively benign conditions in the DP camps, didn't help. The Baltics presented another problem. These three little states, independent in the interwar years, occupied successively by the Soviet Union and the Reich during the war, were now part of the Soviet Union. The great majority of Baltic DPs were strongly anti-Communist and didn't recognise the Soviet Union as a *patria*; many had left voluntarily with or in the wake of the retreating German forces in 1944. Although the Soviet Union regarded the Balts as its citizens, it was prepared to acquiesce in the Allies' decision in 1945 not to repatriate them. It was a different story with the Ukrainians who found themselves in Germany at the end of the war, some because they'd volunteered or been conscripted for labour in Germany during the war; some because they'd been captured as Red Army soldiers and held as prisoners of war; some because they'd fled from occupied Soviet territory with the retreating Germans. To complicate matters, some of the Ukrainians came from regions that had been part of Poland before the war but were now part of the Soviet Union; others had been Soviet

citizens before the war but were eager to conceal the fact for fear of forcible repatriation. The Soviets wanted 'their' Ukrainians back; the Poles did not.

Nobody wanted to admit to having been a Soviet citizen before the war, initially out of fear of forced repatriation, and subsequently because 'Communist' connections were no recommendation for the selection committees from the United States and other countries which in the late 1940s were deciding the DPs' future. Relatively few DPs admitted to being Russian, and those who did would generally claim to belong to the post-Revolutionary contingent of Russian émigrés in Prague or Belgrade. We will never know how many former Soviet citizens there were among the DPs because forged identity documents were rife, and nationality was often established simply on the basis of an individual's own statement. If a Russian or Ukrainian claimed to be Polish, gave a Polish birthplace and could manage a few words in the language (easy for Ukrainians, not too hard even for Russians), how was a harassed IRO official from the Midwest to know the difference?

The Soviet Union was the problem in other ways as well. DPs were initially understood to be people displaced and/or persecuted by the Third Reich in the course of the Nazis' wartime rampage through Europe. The category specifically excluded German *Aussiedler* expelled from various East European countries immediately after the war: these constituted a group of refugees in postwar Germany at least as numerous as the 'victims of Nazi Germany' under Allied protection. One might have expected that most DPs would want to go home after being liberated, as had been the case with the millions of refugees and prisoners of war looked after by Nansen's International Office for Refugees after the First World War. In 1918, for a few groups like Russians fleeing the Revolution and Armenians fleeing the Turks, the problem was that their country of origin didn't want them back and had taken away their citizenship, leaving them stateless. After the Second World War, DPs usually had states that claimed them but the DPs themselves wanted nothing to do with them. Objection to return on the DPs' part was understood as an objection to Communism, which was generally true enough, though not the whole story, since economic factors were also very much in play: any comparison of living standards was much to the East's disadvantage. This meant that the DPs were increasingly understood as being 'victims of Communism', rather than the 'victims of Nazism' they had been at the start.

As Gerard Daniel Cohen persuasively argues, Allied recognition of the DPs' objections to returning, and the prevailing sense of a profound difference between the 'democratic' Allies and the Soviet bloc, were important factors in the development of the Cold War. The forced repatriations of POWs in the early postwar months, marked by anguished protests and suicides, were traumatic for the Allies. The executions and large-scale arrests that followed on the other side of the border, led first the United States and then Britain to desist from mass repatriation to the Soviet Union. A vivid impression of the horror of living in the USSR formed in the minds of the Allies; and Soviet ranting about 'quislings' and war criminals in the DP camps refusing to go home out of fear of just punishment did little to dispel it. From the Soviet standpoint, the only DPs who had an acceptable reason to refuse repatriation were Jews and Spanish Republicans: all the rest could safely be assumed to be traitors. The question of the Soviet Union's unpopularity with its citizens was no doubt more complicated than it appeared to many Western observers at the time. As the Harvard Interview Project on the Soviet Social System (conducted largely among DPs in Germany and former DPs in New York in the early 1950s) showed, many Soviet refugees expressed a fairly high level of approval for Soviet institutions and, on close questioning, explained that their involuntary wartime status as prisoners of war or non-resistant civilians under German occupation had made their future as Soviet citizens unviable. A number of DPs told American interviewers that but for such a black mark, whose dire consequences were clear to any Soviet citizen, they would probably not have wanted to leave. But contemporary observers, however well-intentioned, couldn't be expected to pick up these nuances. Even Eleanor Roosevelt, a US representative at the UN in 1945, who could scarcely be accused of dyed-in-the-wool anti-Communism, was appalled by the Soviet stance on DPs and repatriation, and sparred repeatedly in the General Assembly with the Soviet representative Andrey Vyshinsky (he'd been the state prosecutor in the Moscow show trials of the late 1930s).

Cohen's main archival source is the IRO in Paris, which he rather surprisingly claims has 'never before [been] comprehensively used' in scholarly studies, along with UN publications and US government documents, and it's a pity that on many issues the Soviet side remains as opaque to him as it was to Western diplomats and aid officials at the time. His subject is Allied understanding and handling of the DP problem and how it shaped the postwar international order; and perhaps, given the minority status and

ineptitude of the Soviets on the international scene at this point, that really is most of the story. Although the case he makes is convincing – negotiations over the DPs probably did set the template for subsequent Cold War confrontations – I wonder whether a parallel and complementary story couldn't be told, by someone capable of mining Soviet and Polish archives.

When the Soviet Union withdrew from the IRO immediately after its foundation in 1946, essentially because of American dominance of the organisation and its stand against forcible repatriation of DPs, it was a parting of the ways that reflected and exacerbated growing Cold War tensions. 'Displaced persons' were originally defined as 'civilians forcibly uprooted by the war outside of their country of origin'. But as anti-Communism trumped anti-Fascism in Allied thinking about the DPs, this definition gave way to one that was much more politically charged. DPs came to be seen as political refugees whose 'valid objections' to repatriation included 'persecution, or fear based on reasonable grounds of persecution because of race, religion, nationality or political opinion'. With the exception of Jewish refugees, who were not cross-examined on their political attitudes, late applicants for DP status (for example, the contingent coming out of Czechoslovakia in 1948 after the establishment of a Communist government there) needed to demonstrate political motives for flight to gain acceptance: purely economic ones were not enough. On the Allied side, DPs were coming to be seen as a democratic freedom-fighting community whose hatred of Communism was based on first-hand experience, a prototype for the Hungarian freedom fighters of the next decade. On the Soviet side, by contrast, the DPs (except for the Jews and Spanish Republicans) were a bunch of willing collaborators and war criminals, a judgment at least partly shared by many on the international left. The Soviets clashed with the Allies on the interpretation of Latvian or Ukrainian service in the Waffen-SS, the Latvian Legion and the HIWIs (voluntary assistants to the Germans during wartime occupation of Soviet territory). The Soviet Union regarded such activities as ipso facto proof of pro-German and pro-Nazi attitudes, and UNRRA took the same line. The IRO adopted the US position (partly a result of domestic lobbying by Baltic and Ukrainian groups) that these were not automatic grounds for exclusion from DP status.

The evolving politicisation of the DP was manifest in the repeated 'screenings' that DPs went through, organised first by the occupation forces and UNRRA and later by the

IRO. A rare example of ‘epuration on a supranational scale’, the screenings struck fear into the DPs’ hearts – epithets like ‘American-Gestapo’ circulated in the camps. Initially aimed at expelling war criminals and collaborators, with Balts and Ukrainians under particular scrutiny by Allied military and counter-intelligence, the screening gradually shifted its focus to the matter of whether or not DPs had a ‘democratic’ (anti-Communist) profile; the aim was also to weed out ethnic Germans, economic refugees and ‘high-profile collaborators’. Simon Wiesenthal, a Jewish survivor of the concentration camps and a leading Nazi hunter from the late 1940s on, considered the IRO ‘outrageously lenient’ in its attitude to suspected war criminals. By 1950, as Cohen points out, ‘refugees deemed “impostors” and “security threats” in the days of UNRRA were offered the chance to emigrate to Australia or the North American continent.’

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On human rights, as on the refugee repatriation issue, the Soviets found themselves more and more on the defensive. The aftermath of World War Two saw a remarkable burgeoning of humanitarian concern about rights, enshrined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which included ‘the right of anyone to leave any country’ (Article 13) and ‘the right to seek and enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution’ (Article 14). The DP issue set the parameters of discussion, Cohen argues, starting with what he calls ‘the first human rights resolution ever adopted by the United Nations General Assembly’: the prohibition, in February 1946, of forcible repatriation of DPs. Initially, human rights had been a shared concern of the Western Allies and the Soviet Union; indeed, the Soviet Union saw itself as occupying the moral high ground because of the guarantees in its own 1936 Constitution, while the West was tarred by racial discrimination in the United States and colonialism in Europe. The Cold War changed that. Human rights were increasingly defined in liberal-individualist terms – furthering ‘the rights of man, not the rights of governments’, as Eleanor Roosevelt expressed it. The ‘social rights’ to work and welfare that the Soviets boasted of were not included. The Soviets never quite understood how they had been so wrongfooted on an issue they considered their own; but they continued to be spectacularly outmanoeuvred by the West on this issue throughout the Cold War, up to and beyond the Helsinki Accords of the 1970s.

Cohen argues that the DP question played a large part in the framing of Jewish nationhood. By 1948 a quarter of a million Jewish DPs – 60 per cent of them Polish

Jews repatriated from the USSR – had congregated in the American Zone in Germany, since the British wouldn't accept the new arrivals from Eastern Europe in the areas they controlled. At first, the international and Allied military authorities hadn't wanted to recognise Jews as a distinct category of DPs, partly because their numbers were small before the arrival of the 'infiltrees' and partly because they found that approach repugnant in the light of Nazi racial segregation. The Jewish DPs themselves demanded separate recognition and housing, however, and after the Harrison Report of August 1945, so did the Americans on their behalf. 'Contrary to the collective invisibility and silence of Holocaust survivors elsewhere in Europe,' Cohen writes, 'Jewish DPs loudly asserted their identity in front of military authorities, German civilians, welfare professionals and a cohort of journalists and foreign dignitaries.' Many Jewish DPs wanted to be resettled in Mandate Palestine, and the Americans were sympathetic to that too, despite British reservations. Even before the foundation of the state of Israel, the IRO had sent six thousand Jewish DPs to Palestine. Operations were temporarily suspended after Israel's formal establishment in May 1948 because of the Arab-Israeli conflict, but resumed in 1949, when the IRO paid 'Joint' (the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee) and the Jewish Agency for Palestine $10 million to move 120,000 Jewish DPs to Palestine. The total number of Jewish DPs under IRO jurisdiction who ultimately settled in Israel was 132,000. 'Without the visible presence of Holocaust survivors in the DP camps of Germany, Austria and Italy,' Cohen writes, 'Jewish statehood may simply never have been achieved.'

The Soviet Union too had supported the creation of the state of Israel, and, along with other Soviet-bloc countries including Poland, firmly defended the Jewish cause at the UN: 'for the USSR and its first satellites, Jews … constituted a special case among the displaced persons and deserved more than others to be granted international status.' Cohen calls this 'a unique brand of anti-Fascist philosemitism' that paralleled the pro-Jewish policies of the United States in the wake of the Harrison Report. Philosemitism in the international arena co-existed oddly with postwar upsurges of domestic anti-semitism in Poland and the USSR. For both nations, Cohen argues, the Jewish DPs 'represented a separate nationality: extraneous to ethnicised Soviet and Polish polities yet compassionately presented as a collectivity deserving of national rights elsewhere'.

The fate of the Palestinians, in Cohen's account, falls under the heading of collateral damage. Formally neutral in the Arab-Israeli conflict, the IRO was criticised for de facto support of the Israeli side and indifference to the fate of Palestinian refugees: in May 1949, the Lebanese representative to the UN charged that 'by supporting a policy of clearing out a whole area, thereby creating displaced persons in order to settle other persons there, the IRO was partly responsible for the fate of the Arab refugees from Palestine.' There was some dispute about whether the IRO's mandate was truly international or essentially European, but the latter view prevailed: its job was purely to clean up the mess left by the Second World War. The IRO officially closed up shop in 1952, after the majority of DPs had been resettled, leaving the West German government to cope with the remnant of the old and sick for whom no placement had been found. Although the IRO gave some humanitarian aid to Palestinian refugees, it never formally categorised the Palestinians as DPs covered by its mandate. So although the Palestinian diaspora later 'forged its own extraterritorial identity within the confines of United Nations refugee camps', just as the Jewish DPs had done in 1945-48, 'what Palestinians did not obtain from the refugee protection system was similar recognition as a non-territorial nation.' If 'reterritorialisation of the Jews' was one of the signal triumphs of the humanitarian refugee regime in postwar Europe, Cohen concludes, it was 'sadly accompanied by the deterritorialisation of another people'.

Voldemort or Stalin?

Sheila Fitzpatrick

- *Music for Silenced Voices: Shostakovich and His Fifteen Quartets* by Wendy Lesser
  Yale, 350 pp, £18.99, April 2011, ISBN 978 0 300 16933 1
- *Shostakovich in Dialogue: Form, Imagery and Ideas in Quartets 1-7* by Judith Kuhn
  Ashgate, 296 pp, £65.00, February 2010, ISBN 978 0 7546 6406 2

Dmitry Shostakovich was once seen in the West as the quintessential Soviet loyalist. Avant-garde composers despised him and official descriptions of him as a 'fighter for peace', 'progress' and 'humanism' didn't help his reputation in the world outside. Things he himself said over the years appeared to confirm the Soviet image: his Third Symphony (1930) was entitled *First of May* and a Soviet music journal reported him as saying in 1940 that 'to write a symphony immortalising Lenin's name' had always been

his ‘cherished dream’ (though he never did write one). His enormously successful Seventh (‘Leningrad’) Symphony was, he said in 1941, the year of its premiere, ‘about … our sacred war and our victory’.

Everything miraculously changed in 1979, when a recent émigré, Solomon Volkov, smuggled out of the USSR the manuscript of a book that he described as Shostakovich’s memoirs. He called it *Testimony*, and represented its apparent author as a bitter anti-Stalinist, and a victim of the regime. Maxim Shostakovich, Dmitry’s conductor son, arriving in the West that same year, noted cautiously that *Testimony* (whose authenticity many questioned) was a book about his father rather than by him. Nevertheless, Maxim basically accepted the ‘victim of Stalin’ label, and who can blame him, given the enormous boost it gave his father’s (and his own) reputation, particularly in Cold War America? The cellist Mstislav Rostropovich, an even more high-profile defector of the same period, promoted his old friend’s music along similar lines. It was the beginning of a new era in Shostakovich’s Western reception.

Word went round that his pro-Soviet statements were not his at all but written by others and published under his signature. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, a small flood of memoirs – of which Elizabeth Wilson’s *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered* (1994) was the most notable – and published correspondence and interviews with his friends showed him full of acid-tongued contempt for the stupidities of Soviet bureaucracy. Even the famously patriotic ‘Leningrad’ symphony turned out to have a secret anti-Soviet programme: Flora Litvinova, who had met Shostakovich when they were both evacuated to Kuibyshev during the war, said he had told her ‘straight out that the Seventh Symphony, and for that matter the Fifth as well, were not just about Fascism but about our system, or any form of totalitarian regime’.

The facts of his life can be read either way. The Shostakovich family, like most Petersburg intellectuals, held mildly radical views in 1917; there was even a Bolshevik uncle on his mother’s side. Mitya, who was 11 in 1917, was a child prodigy, and despite the unpropitious times achieved spectacular early success as a pianist and a composer. Like most of his contemporaries, he saw himself as a revolutionary musician; the political revolution had paved the way for his challenge to tradition. By the mid-1920s, he was on familiar terms with such avant-garde celebrities as the theatre director Vsevolod Meyerhold and had acquired highly placed political friends and protectors –

Marshal Tukhachevsky was one. His star continued to rise in the 1930s, and the Maly Theatre's premiere of his second opera, *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, was the event of the 1934 Moscow season; Stalin, Molotov and other leaders came to a later performance to see what all the fuss was about. Unfortunately, they didn't like what they heard and saw – not tuneful enough, too 'formalist' (modernist, Western) in idiom, too much sex – and the work was roundly condemned in*Pravda*. It was a substantial blow, but even as his colleagues dutifully criticised the opera in public, the Soviet arts boss Platon Kerzhentsev was responding warmly to his pleas for help in regaining official favour (while at the same time assuring the Politburo that Shostakovich had learned his lesson). By the end of the 1930s he was already back in favour, and he then scored an enormous domestic and international hit with his wartime Seventh Symphony.

Another setback came in 1948, when he was again publicly criticised, this time along with Prokofiev and Khachaturian, for his old sin of formalism, which meant writing music that wasn't easily accessible to popular audiences. This time, it may have hurt him psychologically but it didn't damage his career. Stalin had already shown a benevolent interest in him – or at least recognised that he was an asset worth protecting – in 1946, when his request for a better apartment (initially addressed to Beria, whom he presumably considered a patron) was not only granted but improved on, at Stalin's suggestion, to include a car and a dacha. A few years later, he received one of Stalin's famous phone calls out of the blue offering general reassurance and material help (this time, access to medical care at the Kremlin hospital for his whole family). He never felt obliged to join the Party in Stalin's time, though he served conscientiously for many years as an elected deputy to the Supreme Soviet and was a powerful member of the Composers' Union executive and an active committee man. In 1960, however, he surprised everyone by joining the Party, telling sceptical friends shamefacedly that he was being forced to do so.

His friends criticised him for signing open letters condemning dissidents and disapproved of the young Komsomol activist who briefly became his second wife after the death of the first. Younger composers like Edison Denisov, now back in contact with Western contemporary music after the quarter-century break of the Stalin era, were inclined to see him as behind the times, though still a towering figure. But for the Soviet public the 1960s was the decade in which he achieved iconic status as a 'truth-

teller' in the spirit of Khrushchev's Thaw. His Thirteenth (*Babi Yar*) Symphony (1962), setting a text by the charismatic young poet Evgeny Evtushenko, honoured the memory of Jews killed by the Nazis in the Second World War (and thus implicitly raised the issue of Soviet anti-semitism); his Fourteenth Symphony (1969), setting a variety of texts on the un-Soviet topic of death, seemed equally daring as a challenge to the optimistic tenets of socialist realism. The premieres of these works drew such hysterical applause that they amounted almost to political demonstrations. Even the older works now acquired resonance of a quasi-oppositional kind. Attending a performance of the Leningrad Symphony in the early 1970s, the musicologist Richard Taruskin, then an exchange student at the Moscow Conservatory, was shocked to find that the Soviet audience 'valued this music, which I had been taught to despise, more highly than I valued any music, and that Shostakovich meant more to his (and their) society than any composer meant to mine'.

Russians often say they hear 'the truth' in these works of the mature Shostakovich, and the notion of a shining single truth capable of being expressed by anyone brave enough to challenge the official 'lies' was particularly popular during the Thaw. Just how one might do this in music is a mystery, but it's easier to understand when one remembers the standard romantic programme with its lone heroes striving to maintain their integrity against the onslaughts of a soulless world. That's the programme Russian audiences know and love from Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninov; and it works for Shostakovich, too, if you put 'the Soviet system' in the place of 'the world'.

At the same time, nobody could mistake Shostakovich for a late-romantic Eastern European telling heartfelt personal stories in the manner of Smetana's 'From My Life' or Janácek's 'Intimate Letters'. Shostakovich's musical idiom, which originally derived from the post-romantic modernism of the 1920s, is often explicitly anti-romantic: he is a mocker and self-parodist, a tease, someone whose music – especially the chamber music – is filled with 'wrong notes' and intentional violations of a listener's expectations. One of his most moving works, the Eighth Quartet, written on a visit to Dresden in 1960 and dedicated to the victims of war and Fascism, was made intensely personal by its obsessive repetition of the DSCH (or D, E flat, C, B natural) motif, derived from his own initials. The dedication and motif are themselves a jarring contradiction, compounded when we find Shostakovich describing the new quartet to his friend Isaak Glikman as a 'pseudo-tragic quartet, so much so that while I was

composing it I shed the same amount of tears as I would have to pee after drinking half a dozen beers'. For musicologists, always wary of the notion that music contains 'ideas', all this is a problem.

Shostakovich studies have been riven by controversy since the publication of Volkov's book, some still seeing him as Stalin's victim and interpreting the music accordingly, others – including the big guns of Western studies of Soviet music, Taruskin, Simon Morrison and Laurel Fay – trying to clear away the emotional-political undergrowth. The problem is aggravated by the fact that the autobiographical subtext is often so vivid for performers as well as listeners. The Emerson String Quartet found the quartets so clearly autobiographical that they commissioned a theatre piece, *The Noise of Time*, in which the story of the composer's life was narrated as a counterpoint to the performance of the Fifteenth (and last) Quartet. 'I started to see the quartets as little plays, as little dramas, basically, with four characters,' the violinist Philip Setzer told Wendy Lesser. 'In the Eighth, for instance, three people are holding sustained notes and one is "crying".'

Lesser interviewed members of six quartets which regularly perform Shostakovich's music, including the Fitzwilliam and the Borodin. Neither a musicologist nor a musician, and inclined to sidestep the musicological debate, Lesser takes the quartets to be a 'diary' that records the 'story of his soul' over the 36 years of their composition, from 1938, when he was 31, to 1974, the year before his death. She justifies this by telling us that only after learning about Shostakovich's life was she 'able to hear what was there all along in the quartets'. At the same time she knows that Shostakovich is quite capable of inserting false clues in his work, and that 'it is easy to confuse the autobiography of reception with the autobiography of creation, to imagine that the composer (or writer, or painter) simply put in the same feelings that we later took out.' She is aware that musicologists like Taruskin (thanked in her acknowledgments) are wary of biographical readings and concedes the point gracefully before nevertheless going ahead with her biographical reading. She can 'feel a voice speaking' to her through the quartets, and so can Russian audiences and many of the professional musicians she interviews. What else to conclude but that the composer 'has actually planted that thread or storyline in the cycle of quartets'?

So what's the story? Despair, terror, sorrow and guilt about survival are possibilities, but Lesser settles for death and its contemplation. The Second Quartet (1944) is 'about'

the wartime death of Shostakovich's great friend Ivan Sollertinsky; the last movement of the Third Quartet (1946) is telling us that 'we think we are alive, but we are actually already dead.' The endings of many of the movements in the quartets are marked to be played*morendo*, or dying away.

There is 'a powerful sense of truth' in the string quartets, Lesser feels, though whether that just means that the music 'accurately represents the man himself, or perhaps the man and his circumstances', or constitutes a larger claim for the truth of his music as a statement about human existence as a whole, remains uncertain. Lesser would like to make the larger claim but is 'hard-pressed to demonstrate how it works'. Her Shostakovich is a slippery character, 'a man in hiding, a secret self behind a public face', someone whose public statements are often evasive or outright misleading, a man who makes compromises and regrets them, who is peculiarly prone to a sense of shame.

Part of the slipperiness has to do with his obsessive habit of quoting (his own music and other composers') in his works. He rivals Eliot as a gatherer of fragments 'shored against my ruin', though whether this is in fact their function in Shostakovich is unclear: he told Glikman (apropos of the Fifteenth Symphony) that although it was something he had to do, he had no idea why. All this quoting is great for musicologists, but, like Nabokov experts, they don't like feeling that they are being teased. When Shostakovich repeatedly quotes Rossini's *William Tell* Overture in the first movement of the Fifteenth Symphony, is this to be understood as a motif for freedom, as some commentators have speculated? A hint that Shostakovich, like Rossini, had 'lived slightly too long', as he suggested in a letter to a friend? Or just a tune that was part of the musical baggage carried in his head and put in for no particular reason?

For such a man, Lesser concludes, 'silence was at the heart of his enterprise', in music as in life. Given the nature of the Soviet regime, it was a choice between 'silence or capitulation'; 'to speak … was to betray' oneself and others. Lesser's emphasis on the Stalinist context of the quartets, though common among musicologists, is odd when one considers that only five of the 15 were written in Stalin's lifetime. Odd, too, is the characterisation of a composer who produced 15 quartets, 15 symphonies and a wealth of other music as a 'silenced voice', a term familiar from Cold War rhetoric on the state of the arts in the Soviet Union. Lesser claims not to want to revert to this rhetoric, and her concluding statement on Shostakovich's silences implies a multitude of different

meanings: silences in the musical sense of rests, when particular players sit out for extended periods; silence as ‘the white part of the canvas’; the companionable silence that Shostakovich enjoyed with friends; politically enforced silence; silence as failure to speak out against injustice; and finally the silence of audiences, bowled over by the impact of his emotional message, ‘that brief moment between the music’s end and the start of the clapping’. In the end, the metaphor turns out to be so all-encompassing that it doesn’t seem very useful.

Judith Kuhn is both a musicologist and an amateur cellist, who knows the quartets from playing as well as studying them; and her book offers musical analyses of the first seven, each introduced with a sensible contextual essay. Like Lesser, Kuhn is interested in the issue of communication, taking off from Bakhtin; all utterances are ‘filled with echoes and reverberations of other utterances’. One’s eyes can glaze over at any invoking of Bakhtin, whose ‘dialogic imagination’ has gained cult status in the literary field, but in this case it is genuinely illuminating. Kuhn says she intends to focus on two ‘overlapping dialogues’: Shostakovich’s dialogue with his critics, and his ongoing dialogue with ‘conventional genre and form’. That’s a fairly narrow description of what she actually does, which includes showing how Shostakovich was in constant dialogue with his musical predecessors (all those quotations), as well as with Soviet audiences and musicologists, whose engagement with his music she considers less political and more benign than is usually thought.

It’s very hard for a musicologist to present a technical argument that is both comprehensible and convincing to lay readers, but Kuhn has done a first-rate job. You don’t even have to be able to read a score, though it helps (she gives musical examples); and she tells you what you need to know about sonata form. Classical sonata form (as in Mozart and Haydn) typically requires an initial statement of two themes in different keys, followed by a development section and finally a recapitulation, in which the second theme returns in the same key as the first, thus ‘resolving’ the original tension between them. Shostakovich’s quartets, as Kuhn shows, contain many sonata-form movements, and every one of the first six quartets fails to resolve according to the rules, leaving the listener with a sense both of a classically ordered structure and then of its violation. Disappointment of expectations is a habitual trope in Shostakovich that most listeners will recognise, but Kuhn’s idea of a ‘failed’ sonata form takes us further than the more familiar ‘wrong note’. According to

Adorno, the message of the 'failed' sonata form in a 20th-century context is that 'the system and its seamless unity, its appearance of reconciliation, is dishonest', so perhaps the Russians are on to something with their idea of 'truth-telling' in Shostakovich's music. At the very least it helps us to understand how Shostakovich could both have his socialist-realist cake and eat it.

Kuhn's Shostakovich is above all a professional musician, highly educated and knowledgeable, for whom music is simply more interesting than anything else. That doesn't mean that other things didn't impinge: her Shostakovich is in dialogue both with the regime, and with the intelligentsia, which in the post-Stalin period came to read a quite different meaning into his works. Shostakovich obviously knew this, just as he had earlier known more or less what the Stalinists wanted from him; the difficulty lies in deciding how far this knowledge affected what he wrote.

The Jewish issue is particularly interesting in this connection. From the early 1940s, Shostakovich started to make extensive use of Jewish themes (mainly musical, but sometimes textual) in his quartets and other works. It's possible to read this as a political statement, as a criticism of Soviet anti-semitism, particularly the quasi-official anti-semitism that came to the surface in the late Stalin period. This reading is persuasive for late works like the *Babi Yar*Symphony but it works less well as an explanation of the Jewish motifs in the wartime chamber music, written at a time when the regime maintained its traditional opposition to foreign and domestic anti-semitism. Clearly Shostakovich found the 'laughter through tears' quality of Jewish folk music, expressed in such devices as major-minor alternation, musically congenial. In the early 1940s, as Kuhn points out, particular circumstances brought Jewish music to his attention: his friendship with the Jewish composer Mieczyslaw Weinberg, a newly arrived refugee from Poland; the task he assumed of completing the Jewish-inflected opera *Rothschild's Violin*, written by his student Veniamin Fleischmann, who had died at the front; and the fact that another friend, Moisei Beregovsky, was writing a dissertation, defended at the Moscow Conservatory in 1944, on Jewish instrumental folk music.

At the same time, it's clear that from the standpoint of the Russian public, and from Shostakovich's standpoint too, that Jewish themes acquired a new resonance with the murder in 1948 of the Jewish theatre director Solomon Mikhoels, Weinberg's father-in-law – Weinberg himself was briefly arrested in connection with the Doctors' Plot in

1953. At this point, any use of Jewish themes had ceased to be a purely musical matter – particularly for a man like Shostakovich, who had not only taken the risk of interceding with Beria on Weinberg's behalf but had also assumed legal guardianship of Weinberg's daughter at the time of his arrest. A decade later, *Babi Yar* firmly (and surely intentionally) asserted Shostakovich's sympathy for Jews suffering persecution, to the point that in Russian folk memory he is still often identified as having been himself a Jew.

Shostakovich would surely have appreciated the many ironies of his life and his posthumous reputation. There's the fact for a start that, as Setzer remarked to Lesser, 'he was forced to write for the masses and he *did* … Audiences really love even his difficult pieces.' In other words, the regime's demand that his music be accessible paid off. But the irony is compounded because first Soviet and then Western audiences came to love his music for what in Soviet terms were the wrong reasons. Western audiences started to fall in love with it in the 1970s because they saw him as a victim of an oppressive regime. In the same period, the Soviet intelligentsia was thrilled by what it heard as the voice of a truth-teller, bearing witness to individual and collective suffering. Shostakovich, so irreverent and iconoclastic in youth, was being canonised posthumously as a romantic – a rare modern composer whose music comes from and speaks to the heart. To some young Russians, however, what matters is that if you compare their photographs, Shostakovich and Harry Potter are practically the same person. 'It's not Harry Potter, it's the composer Dmitry Dmitrievich Shostakovich,' a Russian website proclaims, featuring a photograph of the young Shostakovich with round schoolboy glasses, boyish face, high forehead with dark hair flopping over one side, rosebud mouth.

The discussion eventually gets derailed onto the ever popular question of whether Shostakovich (and perhaps Harry Potter too?) was a Jew. Whichever way, it's clear that Shostakovich was in there with Harry fighting the Prince of Darkness. As any fan knows, by the last of the series, *The Deathly Hallows*, Hogwarts has become a totalitarian institution, with Voldemort as its dictator. Voldemort or Stalin – what's the difference? The Harry and Mitya team, with their round glasses and remarkable musical/magical skills, will rout him in the end.

Deaths at Two O'Clock

Sheila Fitzpatrick

- *Lost to the Collective: Suicide and the Promise of Soviet Socialism, 1921-29* by Kenneth Pinnow
Cornell, 276 pp, £32.95, March 2011, ISBN 978 0 8014 4766 2

Say you are killing yourself in the name of the Russian intelligentsia, and you will die like a hero. That one shot will awaken the sleeping conscience of this country … Your name will become a household word. Your death will be the topic of the day. Your picture will be in all the papers … The Russian intelligentsia will gather about your coffin. The cream of the nation carry you through the streets.

Nikolai Robertovich Erdman's play *The Suicide*, written in 1928, satirises the contemporary preoccupation with suicide as a political message. Citizen Podsekalnikov is an ordinary man, out of work and demoralised by having to live off his wife. But when his suicide plans become known, people flock to his apartment, begging him to kill himself in their name – in the name of the intelligentsia, of 'social aliens', of the clergy. Initially, Podsekalnikov doesn't have a political motive, but he catches on quickly:

I am about to die. Who is to blame? Our leaders, dear comrades, they are the ones. Go to one of our dear leaders and ask him: what have you done for Podsekalnikov? He won't answer you that question, comrades, because he doesn't even know that there is a Podsekalnikov in the Soviet Union.

One can understand the censors' nervousness about putting on the play, which, despite lukewarm encouragement from Stalin, was pulled from production at the Meyerhold Theatre on the eve of its premiere in the autumn of 1932. This was probably just as well, since Stalin's wife, Nadezhda Allilueva, killed herself a few weeks later.

Suicide was a highly politicised topic in late imperial Russia and the Soviet Union. In the 1880s, and again in the aftermath of the 1905 Revolution, Russians believed their country – or at least its main cities – had been engulfed in an 'epidemic of suicide', especially among the young. In the 1880s, educated opinion, always ready to blame any malaise on the government, saw the supposed suicide epidemic as a social pathology – 'degeneration' was the word most often used. Newspapers gave generous coverage to suicides, and Dostoevsky was among their fascinated readers. After the failure of the 1905 Revolution, the public attributed the wave of suicides to

disappointed hopes of revolutionary change. Suicide became the symbol of everything that was wrong with Russia's governance.

Within the revolutionary movement, any suicides that could be directly linked to state repression – prison suicides were the prime example – were seen as heroic acts of defiance, with the dead joining the roll of revolutionary martyrs. 'Terrorists' – the term seems to have been coined by the People's Will, the wing of the Populist revolutionary party responsible for the assassination of Alexander II in 1881 – considered the taking of another life justified insofar as they were offering up their own: a philosophy not so different from that of present-day suicide bombers, except for the fact that the Russian public, unlike the contemporary Western one, at least partly accepted the justification. As Marxists, the Bolsheviks were against terrorism on principle, but emotionally they were not unresponsive to the notion of a life for a life. Lenin's elder brother, Alexander Ulyanov, had been executed for an attempt on the life of Alexander III in 1887.

Kenneth Pinnow is not concerned with suicide as a political gesture: what interests him more is suicide as a subject of disciplinary expertise, particularly medical, and suicide monitoring as an aspect of the modern state's effort to mould the population. Pinnow was part of the cohort of young historians of the Soviet Union trained at Columbia in the 1990s who, influenced by Stephen Kotkin, first brought Foucault to Soviet history.

Psychologists, specialists in forensic medicine and statisticians – all those in Russia who studied the phenomenon of suicide in the first decade of the 20th century – complained of the lack of state support for their scientific endeavours. The imperial Russian state was 'backward', in the experts' view, not least because of its indifference to their own profession-building efforts. It was modern for a country to have rising suicide rates, and even more modern to make them the subject of systematic scientific investigation à la Durkheim, whose pioneering study of suicide had been published in 1897 and was soon translated into Russian. The experts' assumption – that Russia was uniquely predisposed to suicide because of its backward, despotic government – was soon tested: as the statisticians quickly established, Russian suicide rates were actually quite low compared with other countries. Happily for modern science, however, the capital cities – Moscow and Petrograd/Leningrad – had quite respectably high suicide rates both before and after the Revolution.

The suicide rate seems to have dropped during the war years between 1914 and 1921, though in the absence of systematic monitoring, one can't be sure. But in the 1920s the

experts resumed their work, now with more secure professional status and support from the modernising Soviet state, which in its early years was deeply committed to data collection and statistics. Two groups of experts were particularly active in the investigation of suicide: forensic medical researchers and statisticians. Forensic medicine was one of the professions that flourished as never before in the Soviet Union in the 1920s. The general trend, among criminologists too, was to emphasise the social; as Iakov Leibovich, a former gynaecologist from Odessa who was now the country's chief medical examiner, put it, the expert in forensic medicine had become 'a sociologist'. On the initiative of Leibovich and others, the Department of Forensic Medicine (part of the People's Commissariat of Public Health) organised surveys of suicide, circulating questionnaires to doctors and forensic medical practitioners requesting medical details, descriptions of what had happened, testimony on the subject's character and mood and so on. Suicide was no longer a crime as it had been before 1917, but it could still reach the courts, since it was an offence, in the USSR and elsewhere, to drive a minor or dependant to take their own life or assist in such a suicide.

The new discipline of 'moral statistics' (named for the French *statistique morale*) soon claimed suicide as its own. The rubric also covered prostitution, abortion, alcoholism, youth homelessness and crime. Mikhail Gernet, an academic who had taught at Moscow University and worked at Vladimir Bekhterev's Psychoneurological Institute before the Revolution, was the leading figure here. Like Leibovich, he seems to have been neither a Marxist nor a Party member, but his career prospered under the Soviet regime: he helped found the State Institute for the Study of Crime and the Criminal and was the head of the Central Statistical Administration's Department of Moral Statistics. Gernet also collected suicide data, imposing stricter reporting procedures on local statistical agencies. His publication of the national suicide statistics for 1922-25 was regarded by his peers as a distinctively Soviet scientific achievement (modern, systematic, publishing what had previously been hidden). But Gernet always wanted his work to be seen as part of international scholarship as well, labelling his tables in French as well as Russian. This was a time when 'Soviet', 'international' and 'modern' could be seen as mutually reinforcing concepts.

The Communist Party, the Komsomol and the Red Army were concerned with suicide too. The Red Army's Political Administration, which regularly investigated the suicides

of soldiers and officers under the general heading ‘extraordinary events’ (*chrezvychainye proisshestviia*or *ChP*), left a remarkably rich set of suicide data for the 1920s and 1930s, now held in the RGVA archive in Moscow (which, in contrast to other Soviet military archives, has been open since the early 1990s). The Red Army’s political commissars had a different approach to suicide from the experts: as Communists, ‘workers on the ideological front’, they didn’t see themselves as scientists, and had no stake in the concept of modernity or objectivity – they were gathering data on behalf of the Party and security organs as well as the military authorities, not for publication. Their aim was to monitor the mood of the soldiers and they investigated individual suicides both in order to understand the political, social and material problems that might have given rise to them, and to mobilise the collective to prevent further suicide attempts. As with today’s ubiquitous grief counsellors, their job was to help the local collective deal with the tragedy and draw the right political and moral lessons from it.

In the mid-1920s, Russian society was once again in the grip of what was thought to be an epidemic of suicide. Even with the help of the experts’ data-gathering it is difficult to be sure about this, but suicide was certainly a preoccupation of the press, and its resurgence (or perceived resurgence) was a matter of high concern to the Party. If in the bad old days suicide had been an individual response to unbearable repression and lack of hope for the future, why was it still prevalent after the Revolution? Was it, as many Communists feared, a sign of disillusionment and of the Revolution’s degeneration, an indication that the earlier optimism and sense of revolutionary purpose were waning? But then whose fault was that? The Stalinist leadership, oppositionists suggested. On the contrary, the Stalinists argued, the oppositionists’ own *frondisme* and undermining of Party unity were to blame. A string of literary and political suicides in the mid-1920s sparked passionate discussion in the Party, the Komsomol and among the intelligentsia. The suicide of the poet Sergei Esenin in 1925 was thought to have inspired a whole slew of copycat suicides by young people: hence the term*eseninshchina* as a shorthand for suicidal impulses and disillusion among the young. Five years later, Mayakovsky – unlike Esenin, a political activist – killed himself, probably mainly for personal reasons, though many contemporaries believed his persecution by the militant young Communists of RAPP, the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers, played its part.

Within the Party, the old tradition of treating a political suicide with respect retained much of its force in the 1920s, even though the authorities tried to combat it. Party and Komsomol suicides were often linked to expulsion from the Party, or the threat of expulsion, and accusations of having concealed 'bad' social origins. Aron Solts of the Party's Central Control Commission said that Bolsheviks threatened with expulsion should not kill themselves and leave a note declaring that life outside the Party was unthinkable (as some had done): this may have looked like devotion to the Party, but in reality it just showed a lack of courage, an unwillingness to fight for a reversal of the decision. The rhetoric was harsher when the suicide was a prominent member of the opposition whose death seemed intended to make a political point. When the Left Communist Evgeniya Bosh killed herself in 1925, she was denied an official funeral and burial in the Kremlin Wall for her 'act of indiscipline'. When Adolf Ioffe, a longtime Trotskyist, committed suicide in protest against Trotsky's expulsion from the Party in 1927, sympathisers praised him as a martyr for the Revolution, but Stalin's supporters, hinting at his morphine addiction and history of mental illness, denounced him as a proponent of the 'philosophy of decadence'.

For Pinnow, the intensity of the Soviet investigation of suicides is indicative of the 'rise of a social science state', based on scientific expertise, whose aim was the study, control and management of the population. This is an interesting and plausible claim for the decade following the Revolution, but the union of social science and power that Pinnow's suicide experts probably hoped for never materialised. By the end of the 1920s, the intellectual and artistic world had been thrown into turmoil, as 'bourgeois experts' came under suspicion of treason and young outsiders, self-styled 'proletarians' with Party cards, assailed establishments in every field. The social sciences were no exception: the 'modern' professions of sociology, psychology, criminology, demography and statistics suffered tremendous setbacks: they lost control of institutes and journals, and were no longer able to publish or even gather data. In many cultural and scholarly fields, the 'bourgeois' experts, duly chastened, made a comeback after a few years, but not in the social sciences, where the Cultural Revolution inaugurated a 40-year hiatus in the kind of modern, internationally oriented work that had flourished in the 1920s. It was not until Khrushchev's Thaw that social scientists emerged from their boltholes in departments of philosophy, planning, economics and the like and re-established their disciplines.

When the professional experts quit the field, suicide monitoring was left in the hands of the Party practitioners, who were not qualified in any professional discipline. Pinnow calls them experts 'in the care of the political self', but this is just wordplay, a trick to avoid the problem this turn of events causes for his argument. It is paradoxical, to say the least, to call a state that has just banished its social scientists a 'social science state'. However, there is no doubt that Stalinism and surveillance went hand in hand. Suicide monitoring in its post-expert phase demonstrated the strange mixture of paternalist care and vicious abuse that the Stalinist state offered all its citizens. This is a story that Pinnow tells only sketchily in his 20-page epilogue on 'Suicide and Stalinism'. It is worth a closer look, both because it is interesting in itself and as an outcome that might suggest a different reading of the 1920s from Pinnow's.

Judging by the RGVA archive, suicide rates rose in the early 1930s, as did the intensity of their investigation by OGPU, the Red Army and the Party. The rise in suicides is probably attributable both to the social disruption of the period, and to the fact that large numbers of people were being expelled from the Party and Komsomol, losing their government jobs, or being branded 'social aliens' during the Cultural Revolution. Even more than in the 1920s, suicide notes tended to blame the regime or its officials and express disillusionment or despair at being cast out. But in the early 1930s, investigators did not make too much of this, perhaps recognising that invoking a political grievance could simply be a way of ennobling the act. Many suicides, in fact, appear to have occurred when private misery was combined with some public disaster like being accused of kulak connections. Humiliation by the authorities and/or fellow workers is a recurring motif. Sometimes, officials or co-workers who mistreated the suicide were held partly to blame for the death. Often, investigators blamed the local collective (army unit, workplace and so on) for failing to see that one of its members needed help and support.

The case of Polina Sitnikova (not one of Pinnow's, though it comes from the same military archive) is a good example of what one might call the benign monitoring style of the early 1930s. Born in Riga in 1900, Polina joined the Communist Party at 18 and fought in the Civil War. In the early 1930s, like many other Communists of lower-class background and incomplete secondary education, she was sent as a *vydvizhenka* (affirmative action beneficiary) to study at the Air Force Academy in Moscow. Crippled in a plane crash, suffering from tuberculosis, she wasn't physically

strong and the work was hard for her. She was married to an older man (said to be her uncle) and had a young daughter, cared for by a live-in nanny, with whom she spent little time. Her work and Party duties consumed her. Her suicide note, dated 14 October 1932, stated that she was dying for lack of 'strength to continue the fight to correct the general line of the Party'. This wasn't explained, but a group of students at the academy who were bullying her evidently had a lot to do with it. A commission appointed to investigate her death produced a file of more than 40 pages, including interviews with family members, the nanny, friends and fellow students. It concluded that this was basically a non-political suicide, despite the note. Polina was touchy, ill and unhappy at the academy, and perhaps the comrades were not always tactful enough. Ignoring her vague accusations of deviation from the Party line, the inquiry found nobody to blame for her death.

In an intriguingly analogous case, another female student, also a Communist and Civil War veteran, committed suicide in Moscow just a month later. She too had a daughter to whom she seemed indifferent and a live-in nanny; she too suffered from persistent ill-health and tiredness. Her husband, although not as attentive as Polina's, was an older man whom she'd known as a child and probably once called 'uncle'. Though her parents were workers, she'd been better educated than Polina and found her studies at the Industrial Academy less difficult. There was no indication of taunting on the part of fellow students. Her name was Nadezhda Allilueva, and her husband was Joseph Stalin.

Unlike other suicides of the time, Allilueva's was not publicly announced as such. As a result, the Party cell of the Industrial Academy had no occasion to appoint the usual commission to investigate the circumstances of her death, or interview colleagues, friends and family members. But one can imagine the report they might have produced. Doctors would have testified to a variety of physical problems including migraine, heart problems, arthritis, depression and perhaps schizophrenia. Family members and household attendants would have described her wild mood swings and tendency to jealousy, while friends would have conveyed her passionate commitment to her studies. The immediate occasion of the suicide, the commission would have established, appeared to be an irrational outburst of jealousy against her husband at a party. The commission would surely have concluded that nobody was to blame for the death, though it might well have issued a mild rebuke to the husband for lack of tact

and a reprimand to her brother Pavel for having given her the pistol, a present from Berlin, which was so small as to seem almost a toy. One can also imagine a concluding note to the Party cell of the Industrial Academy urging them to investigate 'rightism' among students, which could have contributed to the death.

Given that Stalin set the tone of Soviet political culture, it's hard to avoid attributing significance going beyond the personal to Allilueva's suicide (barely mentioned in Pinnow's book). There were, of course, other pressing matters – the impending famine, for example – that might have been responsible for his increasingly tough approach to social problems. In any case, the Party line on suicide became harsher as the 1930s wore on. The Russian political historian Oleg Khlevniuk told the story of this shift in a book published in 1992 that Pinnow makes little use of. With the approach of the Great Purges, surveillance of suicide took on a different character. It became accusatory, paranoid and vicious. The suicide of prominent Party members was now seen as a political act, an explicit or implicit condemnation of the state; accordingly, official rhetoric branded it cowardly and contemptible. When Mikhail Tomsky, a former trade unionist and leader of the Right Opposition, was named by the former Left Oppositionist Grigory Zinoviev in his testimony at the first of the Moscow show trials that ushered in the Great Purges, he killed himself and left a note to Stalin declaring his innocence. His note was ignored, and *Pravda* announced – in a phrase that would become formulaic – that he had killed himself after being 'led astray by his ties with counter-revolutionary Trotskyite-Zinovievite terrorists'. When the Moscow Party official Furer left a suicide note protesting against the unjust arrest of a friend and colleague, Stalin remarked that such a person commits suicide only 'because he is afraid that everything will be revealed and … does not want to witness his own public disgrace.' Suicide, he added, is one of the 'easiest ways to spit one last time on the Party'. By 1937, the political suicide was someone who had unmasked himself as an enemy of the people.

Pinnow's central hypothesis about the social science state fits only part of his data, as he must know. The experts fell out of the picture in the Soviet Union at the end of the 1920s, and, despite high expectations after the Revolution, the Soviet social science state never existed. Still, he has extracted some memorable nuggets of information from Leibovich's and Gernet's surveys. That women were more inclined to kill themselves after being emancipated by the Revolution perhaps makes sense, but who

would have thought that the most popular time to kill oneself in Russia in the 1920s was two o'clock on a summer afternoon? Not that you want to take that as gospel. Another contemporary survey found that most suicides occurred, like Allilueva's, in the darkness of Russia's long, cold winter.

Many Promises

Sheila Fitzpatrick

- *The People's Artist: Prokofiev's Soviet Years* by Simon Morrison
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It is generally assumed that Soviet composers like Prokofiev and Shostakovich were forced by the regime to simplify their style and write 'life-affirming' music that conformed to the canons of Socialist Realism. Most people think this was bad for their music, though a few hold the contrary. Now comes the shocker from Simon Morrison, a Princeton musicologist: Prokofiev*wanted* to write simple, life-affirming music because he was a Christian Scientist.

Sergei Prokofiev, born in 1891 and schooled in St Petersburg, left Russia in 1918 after graduating from the Conservatory. In the 1920s, when he was building his international career, Paris was his base. On his first visit back to Soviet Russia in 1927, he was delighted with the Leningrad production of his second opera, *Love for Three Oranges*, and pleased to be approached by Vsevolod Meyerhold, the renowned experimental director, about a possible production of *The Gambler*, his first opera. The idea of moving his operations to the Soviet Union was probably mooted at this time, but his enthusiasm waned during the Cultural Revolution of the late 1920s, when the proletarian music organisation RAPM reigned supreme and his maiden attempt at a 'Soviet' theme, in the ballet *Le Pas d'acier*, was panned. The dissolution of RAPM, along with the other militant proletarian organisations in the arts, by Central Committee decree in April 1932, was an encouraging sign: 'It is time to come more often and to stay longer,' Prokofiev wrote to his old friend and lifelong supporter, the composer Nikolai Myaskovsky.

More visits followed. Prokofiev was energetically wooed by Levon Atovmyan, a music official with a revolutionary past, who initially approached him – as well as other émigré musicians with an international reputation – at the suggestion of the Foreign

Ministry. The Soviet ambassador to Paris followed up, making ‘many promises’ about the ‘privileges’ awaiting Prokofiev in the Soviet Union, including ‘housing, commissions, performances, and income that would relieve him of the need to tour’, as Prokofiev’s wife, Lina, later recalled. Commissions started to flow even before his final return and the offer was tempting. ‘The year 1935’ – when he was still based in Paris – ‘was one of the most lucrative of his career, the bulk of his income coming from Soviet sources,’ Morrison writes. His European and American career was doing well but it was a struggle to get his operas performed and he was disappointed at his failure to topple Stravinsky from his pre-eminent position in the contemporary music world.

Of course there were disadvantages to a return to the Soviet Union, as he well knew: two cousins with whom he was in close contact were under arrest. In addition, as one of his Paris friends recalled, ‘he had become accustomed to European comforts and his wife, Lina Ivanovna, was such a European woman that it was difficult to imagine her in a Soviet context.’ (Lina Codina, a cosmopolitan and multilingual singer, was born in Madrid and brought up partly in the United States and Cuba; her Russian connections were tenuous, though she had visited her Russian-speaking Polish grandfather in the Caucasus as a child.) ‘When you come to the USSR, the first impression is of uncouthness,’ Prokofiev wrote in his diary in April 1933. To be sure, ‘under this uncouthness you begin to discern interesting, inspiring people.’

Politics was not a factor in his decision to return. Unlike Shostakovich, he had never had any revolutionary sympathies, though he doesn’t appear to have had any strong feelings against the Revolution either. His overriding concern was to find the place in the world that provided the optimal conditions for his work. As he told his old friend Vladimir Dukelsky, a Russian émigré who, as Vernon Duke, had made a successful career as a Broadway composer,

I care nothing for politics – I’m a composer first and last. Any government that lets me write my music in peace, publishes everything I compose before the ink is dry, and performs every note that comes from my pen is all right with me. In Europe we all have to fish for performances, cajole conductors and theatre directors; in Russia they come to me – I can hardly keep up with the demand.

Prokofiev would no doubt have preferred to keep two home bases, Paris and Moscow, had the authorities not given him to understand after a few years of courtship that he would have to make a firm decision for Moscow or lose his access to Soviet

commissions. Travelling had become a way of life for him, and he seems to have assumed that he would be able to continue making regular trips abroad. As he was preparing to leave Paris, there were worrying signs of change in the political weather. In January 1936, *Pravda* published an editorial entitled 'A Mess instead of Music', attacking Shostakovich's new opera, *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, for its modernist tendencies (known in the Soviet Union as 'formalism'). Lina was worried, and several of their friends warned them that the anti-formalism campaign was likely to spread. But it was too late to draw back easily; and in the end Prokofiev decided to read the situation in a positive light: Shostakovich might be a 'formalist', but he, evidently, was not; why else would the Soviets be wooing him? 'In the months ahead,' Morrison writes, 'Prokofiev allowed himself to believe that, with Shostakovich under a cloud, he had automatically become the pre-eminent Soviet composer' – an interesting transposition of his old competitive relationship with Stravinsky. It was a bad misreading of the way things worked in the Soviet Union.

Prokofiev, Lina and their two sons made the move to Moscow in March 1936. The authorities immediately made good on one of their promises by offering them a two-storey house on the Garden Ring Road: celebrity accommodation, comparable with the house Maxim Gorky had been given when he returned from Capri a few years earlier. But Prokofiev unexpectedly turned it down, giving the unsocialist explanation that 'I can't afford it.' (Unfortunately, Morrison, usually a reliable provider of financial detail, does not say what rent was being asked: it was often the case in the Soviet Union that real luxuries, offered only to a select and well-paid few, were priced absurdly low.) Prokofiev may later have regretted this decision: good apartments were in very short supply in Moscow, and he never got one he really liked.

Now came the challenge of becoming a Soviet composer. Apolitical as he was, Prokofiev nevertheless seems genuinely to have welcomed the idea. He had renounced the 'enfant terrible brashness' of his youthful style some years earlier, opting for what he described as a 'new simplicity', which in effect meant more melody, structures that were easily grasped, and a stronger tonal foundation. Morrison argues convincingly that in advocating simplicity Prokofiev was expressing his own credo rather than toeing an official line. 'What is needed now is to create for the masses in a manner that allows the music to remain good,' he reported in his diary in May 1933. 'My previous,

melodic pieces and my search for a “new simplicity” have prepared me well for this task.’ This was fully in tune with what he wrote for*Izvestia* the following year:

I believe the type of music needed is what one might call ‘light-serious’ or ‘serious-light’ music. It is by no means easy to find the right idiom for such music. It should be primarily melodious, and the melody would be clear and simple without, however, becoming repetitive or trivial … the same applies to the technique, the form – it too must be clear and simple, but not stereotyped.

Prokofiev and his wife had converted to Christian Science in the mid-1920s, and it was Christian Science that provided the basis for his belief that art should represent the principle of the good, that infinite force which – as he wrote in his diary – ‘will necessarily triumph over the finite and temporary phenomenon of evil’. Translated into Soviet terms, this meant that he was in favour of the ‘positive’ and ‘life-affirming’ principles of Socialist Realism. Some of his intellectual friends in the Soviet Union found this hard to swallow: from their standpoint ‘life-affirmation’ had a dreary, official ring, and they lacked the transcendental framework that religion provided for Prokofiev and socialism for the Soviets. Prokofiev recorded a conversation with an old Leningrad friend, the philologist Boris Demchinsky, in which they talked at cross-purposes, until Prokofiev introduced the idea of God, at which point Demchinsky threw up his hands and abandoned the argument. Demchinsky, Prokofiev wrote,

tries to mount an attack on cheerfulness and joyfulness. When neither science nor public opinion provides solutions, music should express the general anxiety. I: the more the sea rages, the more precious a hard rock among the waves becomes. He: but no one will understand the meaning of this rock; besides, what is this feeling of calm based on – on health, self-assurance, individual personality? I: on the emphasis on God. He (immediately changing his tone): well, that’s a different matter.

Prokofiev now not only embraced ‘the new simplicity’ but also showed complete readiness to use Soviet subject matter and even to set Soviet ideological texts. If this seems odd in so apolitical a man, it may best be understood if one sees Prokofiev as the 20th-century equivalent of an 18th-century composer working for noble or ecclesiastical patrons and doing his best to satisfy their requirements. He could make jokes or complain about particular requirements (just as Mozart did), but he was quite uninterested in intellectual debate about them. Like his 18th-century counterparts, but in sharp contrast to the Romantics, he was willing to hack his work around, if that was

necessary to get it performed, to recycle parts of earlier works, and do all kinds of cutting and pasting. As the conductor Samuil Samosud recalled, Prokofiev's desire to see his ill-starred *War and Peace* staged was 'so persistent, so unshakeable, that he was actually willing to cede to all manner of editorial modifications, abbreviations and cuts if only it made it to the theatre'.

Sometimes Prokofiev's way of doing things fitted perfectly in the Soviet context. *Peter and the Wolf*, composed to a libretto featuring Soviet Young Pioneers written by Prokofiev himself, was one of the great successes of his early Moscow years; his music for Eisenstein's film*Alexander Nevsky* was another. On other occasions his sincere attempts to fit the requirements of his patrons worked less well: the problem was that Soviet-flavoured simplicity, coming from a sophisticated European like Prokofiev, could look like sarcasm or parody. When he used the ultra-Soviet Boris Polevoy's *Story of a Real Man* as the basis for an opera, Myaskovsky worried privately that it 'will be taken for a joke'. His choice of Valentin Katayev's *I Am a Son of the Working People* was similarly worrying, especially when he invited ex-Count Aleksiy Tolstoy to write the libretto. Even Prokofiev's first (fully serious) attempt to write appropriately for a Soviet occasion, his *Cantata for the 20th Anniversary of October*, set to texts by Lenin and Stalin, seemed over the top to critics.

The fact that, for understandable reasons, nobody would come right out with such objections added to Prokofiev's confusion about what he had done wrong. He was perplexed, for example, at the very negative reaction when he and Sergei Radlov decided to give their ballet*Romeo and Juliet* a happy ending. Radlov, who had a revolutionary 'left art' background, saw Shakespeare's play as a 'Komsomol-like' text about 'young, strong and progressive people battling against feudal traditions and feudal outlooks on marriage and family'; Prokofiev liked the happy ending both as a Christian Scientist who believed that the bad things in life are contingent and temporary, and for the 'purely choreographic' reason that it was a ballet and the dead can't dance. It was strange, Prokofiev commented, that Soviet critics had been 'more papal than the pope' at the thought of changing a Shakespearean text. Surely a happy ending was the ultimate in life-affirming Socialist Realism? Soviet officials cringed, however, at what they feared would be perceived as a reductio ad absurdum.

During the two decades Prokofiev lived in the Soviet Union, his reputation and material situation had their ups and downs. There were difficulties in the early years,

partly because of the anti-formalism campaign and partly because the music world took time to get used to him. Materially, there was a sharp change for the worse in 1938, when he had to exchange his external passport for an internal one, not valid for foreign travel without special permission; after that, he never again made a trip abroad (though the war and his postwar health problems were presumably partly responsible). The war and immediate postwar years, 1943-47, were his peak period of productivity and success. Then came the collapse of his health, quickly followed by the collapse of his reputation and material circumstances as a result of the *Zhdanovshchina*, another campaign against Western-influenced 'formalism', this time with Prokofiev as well as Shostakovich as targets.

The sharp decline in Prokofiev's standing in 1948, the year of the *Zhdanovshchina*, Morrison writes, owed 'less to ideological considerations than the vagaries of policymakers, factionalism in the bureaucracy, and financial crises'. Unlike many musicologists, Morrison understands that ideology and Politburo policy were only part of the story. Noting that 'for elite artists living under Stalin, official approbation tended to alternate with official condemnation,' he argues that these shifts had complex causes: 'Vacillations in cultural policies affected their careers, but so, too, did disputes within the cultural agencies, miscommunication between those agencies and other tiers of government, and personal rivalries.' He is good, too, about giving the material side of the picture, often omitted in Western accounts more focused on ideology. For Prokofiev, the years immediately after 1948 were nightmarish not only because of his public whipping by Zhdanov but because of the financial consequences. An audit of the Composers' Union slush fund, Muzfond, headed by Prokofiev's friend Atovmyan, revealed embarrassing details of Muzfond's generosity, notably the large interest-free loan that enabled Prokofiev to buy a dacha. At a time when commissions and performance and publishing royalties had temporarily dried up, the composer was faced with a demand for the immediate repayment of 180,000 roubles.

Prokofiev in no way fits the 'dissident' stereotype that is often, rightly or wrongly, applied to Shostakovich; there are no records of anti-regime talk at Prokofiev's table such as we have (courtesy of Solomon Volkov's *Testimony*) about Shostakovich's. Yet Prokofiev never fully acquired the language and reflexes of *Homo sovieticus*. 'The Union of Soviet Composers has not helped me in my creative work,' he wrote flatly in response to a newspaper questionnaire in 1936. Three years later, he wrote a speech

(admittedly never delivered) which started with the bald assertion that 'Soviet art, despite its enormous breadth, is declining in quality,' a development he attributed to the fact that 'the official directive concerning the struggle against formalism has been carried out too zealously.' He was willing to do self-criticism when self-criticism was required – but, intentionally or not, he never did it right. How infuriating it must have been to Soviet cultural officials, awaiting the standard recognition of ideological error after Zhdanov's critique, when Prokofiev acknowledged a possible error of musical judgment only ('a preponderance of recitative over cantilena' in his operas). And on top of that, he was so arrogant. Reluctantly present to hear Zhdanov's criticisms in 1948, Prokofiev (in a story Morrison says is not necessarily apocryphal) sat chatting to his neighbour throughout the speech, which provoked Matvei Shkiriatov, the party's top political-control man, and incidentally one who took himself and his job very seriously, to rebuke him:

'Listen. This concerns you.' 'Who are you?' asked Prokofiev. 'My name isn't relevant. But know this: when I tell you something you'd better pay heed.' 'I never pay attention to comments from people who haven't been introduced to me,' Prokofiev threw back, unfazed.

Zhdanov, overhearing this exchange from the podium, reportedly burst out laughing. My guess is that he was laughing at Shkiriatov.

If Prokofiev's and Shostakovich's table talk differed, it partly depended on who was sitting at the table. Prokofiev's marriage to Lina was already in trouble in the late 1930s. Although she had loyally accompanied him to Moscow, the move had not suited her, personally or professionally, and she was much more obviously rattled by the arrests of friends and restrictions on foreign travel than the imperturbable (or poker-faced) Prokofiev. In 1938, he met Mira Mendelson, a 26-year-old literature student, at a health resort, and in 1941 he left Lina and his sons to live with her.

Mira came from a Jewish family: her parents were both party members, and her father, Abram Mendelson, headed the Institute of Economics. Because of the bitterness attending the break-up of the first marriage, Mira has been the subject of all kinds of hostile rumour, which Morrison rightly ignores: though he obviously does not much care for her, he does his best to give her her due. Mira became Prokofiev's working partner and librettist, as well as his wife; and after his health deteriorated she also served as his nurse. She was very close to her parents, especially her father, and

Prokofiev seems to have got on with him well, too. In fact, in 1946, when the Mendelsons received an extra room, making theirs a three-room apartment, Prokofiev and Mira moved in (though they spent a lot of time outside Moscow at their dacha). All her life, Mira seems to have been strongly dependent on her father (they died in the same year, 1968), and some of this seems to have rubbed off on Prokofiev. It was reportedly Mendelson who had the idea that Prokofiev should write an opera based on *War and Peace*. It was he who was summoned by Mira in the middle of the night when Prokofiev had a bad turn, and he who (as a powerful institute director) provided the car and driver that regularly took Prokofiev, too weak to use public transport, out to the dacha.

As Prokofiev's life was becoming sovietised, at least in the everyday sense, as a result of his second marriage, the opposite was happening to his first wife and sons. Unlike Prokofiev and Mira and most others in their circle, Lina refused to be evacuated from Moscow during the war, fearing to lose the apartment, and she and her sons had a very hard time, despite Prokofiev's attempts to help from afar with money and food. After the war, when Prokofiev tried to get a divorce to marry Mira, the Soviet courts bizarrely refused to recognise the validity of his first marriage, making Lina's position yet more precarious. She spent more and more time in the company of foreign diplomats, a dangerous habit in late Stalinist Russia. In February 1948, the month of Prokofiev's fall from grace, she was arrested as a foreign spy and given a 20-year sentence. By the time she was released from the Gulag in 1956, Prokofiev was already dead. Adding to the existing bitterness between the two wives was the fact that, as a result of the court's decision on the invalidity of the first marriage, Lina had no legal claim on his estate. Finally, under Khrushchev, Lina's as well as Mira's claims were recognised. But it was not until 1974, when she was in her late seventies, that Lina was allowed to leave the Soviet Union.

The biographical story as I have told it is abstracted from Morrison's book, but you have to work to get at it. *The People's Artist* is closer to a source book than a straightforward biography, and biography is in any case only the author's secondary interest ('biographical detail … is provided where it pertains to Prokofiev's creative activities'). The index is good enough to locate most of the details, but it is nevertheless frustrating not to be told more about Prokofiev's personal life – for example, about his friendship with the loyal and wise Myaskovsky. Despite some scattered evidence

throughout the book, Prokofiev's (changing?) personal and professional relationship with Shostakovich is never analysed and remains a mystery.

What Morrison sets out to do is to 'document' Prokofiev's 'artistic rather than his personal decision making'. To this end, he has done a tremendous amount of work in the various Prokofiev archives and is able to give a detailed account of the process whereby each individual work was commissioned, composed, accepted for production or performance, orchestrated, revised (often many times) and reworked in response to criticism or the requirements of directors. All this is done with a lot of detailed musical analysis, but without the musical examples that are so helpful to the reader in, for example, David Nice's study of Prokofiev's pre-Soviet years, *Prokofiev: From Russia to the West 1891-1935* (2003), or Richard Taruskin's *Defining Russia Musically* (1997). This unfortunate decision was perhaps the publisher's rather than the author's. Even if you know the work and understand the technical language, musical analysis without examples is hard to follow. Other readers will find their attention wandering in long paragraphs dealing with such matters as a 'teetering between C sharp and C natural, the mediants of the competing tonal domains' and 'contrapuntal imitation at the tritone rather than the fifth'.

Prokofiev famously died on the same day as Stalin, 5 March 1953. This has stimulated many rhetorical flights, among them the composer Alfred Schnittke's (imagined?) description of the two funerals, written in the glasnost years: 'Along an almost deserted street that ran parallel to the seething mass hysterically mourning the passing of Stalin, there moved in the opposite direction a small group of people bearing on their shoulders the coffin of the greatest Russian composer of the time.' Morrison keeps his distance from this picture. Having lived with Prokofiev, at least vicariously, as the scholarly equivalent of his valet, he is not attracted to the romantic image of him as the suffering Artist against the System. Prokofiev may have died a disappointed man but the grounds of his disappointment were practical: illness and bureaucratic problems getting in the way of his composing; frustration over the failure to get his great opera *War and Peace* properly staged (this complicated saga lasted more than a decade and takes up four column inches in the index). His final regret, expressed to Mira in his last days, could have been voiced by Mozart, Schubert or any other composer who felt cut off in the midst of his life's work: 'But I could have written so much more.'

Normal People

Sheila Fitzpatrick

- *Everything Was For Ever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* by Alexei Yurchak

  Princeton, 331 pp, £15.95, December 2005, ISBN 0 691 12117 6

If there is a prize for best title of the year, this book surely deserves it. Alexei Yurchak, a Russian-born, US-trained anthropologist, has written an interesting and provocative book about the way young Soviet Russians talked in the Brezhnev period and what they meant by what they said. For Yurchak, discourse is everything: there is no 'real world' outside the world we construct via language. He argues that socialism really existed in the Soviet Union because people not only talked the talk (as they had to do) but at some level actually believed it. He also proposes that the Soviet system collapsed when, and because, people stopped talking the talk: 'Soviet late socialism provides a stunning example of how a dynamic and powerful social system can abruptly and unexpectedly unravel when the discursive conditions of its existence are changed.'

Anthropologists usually get their information by talking to people, but if the information you want is about the past this technique doesn't work: by definition, Russians are not talking Soviet anymore. So Yurchak had to become a quasi-historian and look for documentation of past ways of talking, which he did quite ingeniously. It helped that he was a native Soviet speaker. 'The last Soviet generation' is Yurchak's own, which means that the book, despite its disguise as Western theoretically-informed anthropology, has a submerged relationship to a favourite Russian genre, the 'history of my generation', non-confessional autobiography that tells the story of a milieu rather than a person.

But the disguise is heavy. Homi Bhabha, Claude Lefort, Slavoj Žižek, Jean Baudrillard, Jacques Lacan, Tzvetan Todorov, Julia Kristeva, Judith Butler: an extraordinary range of theorists is included. Derrida, Bourdieu, Habermas, De Certeau and Althusser are not forgotten, and even Freud (though not Marx) makes it into the bibliography. We hear about Foucault on modernity, Chakrabarty on postcolonialism, Austin on performative language, Tassi on masks and Deleuze on the rhizome. We are instructed about deterritorialisation, hypernormalisation and manifest intertextuality. Sentences beginning 'In a critical reading of Butler's discussion of performativity, Saba Mahmood draws on Butler's Foucauldian point' may be left forever unfinished by some readers,

perhaps unfairly, as the sentence in its entirety usually makes sense and has some relevance to Yurchak's argument. As the profusion of luminaries suggests (and my list is only partial), Yurchak is not writing within a particular theoretical framework. Rather, he selects whatever serves to illustrate his own ideas and insights, which seems to me preferable to selecting a theoretical template and then finding data to fit it. Yurchak, in short, has something of his own to say; he just feels that he has to legitimate it by authoritative citation.

In any case, only the first hundred or so pages are truly weighed down by theory. The good stuff comes in the five chapters in which he deals with the conventions of Komsomol talk, alternative lifestyles, the imagined West, rock music and jokes. While part of Yurchak's data comes from memoirs and post-Soviet recollections of the 1970s and 1980s, he is well aware of the problems with this type of source: at the best of times people backread current attitudes into the past, but in this case all the informants had just been through a revolution that cast their whole understanding of the past into question. So Yurchak looked for personal documents from the 1970s and 1980s: diaries, letters, written notes, drawings, jokes, slang, music recordings, amateur films. He got them partly by placing advertisements in newspapers, first in St Petersburg, then in Moscow and six provincial cities, asking people for 'personal writings, diaries and correspondence' to document 'our feelings and experiences of the Soviet years', and urging that 'these … important historical documents … not be allowed to vanish'. Many people responded (Yurchak does not give any precise information), most of them in their thirties and forties, and most of them well-educated. Yurchak also had his own experiences and memories, though he rarely cites them directly and rejects the label of 'native anthropologist', given his fifteen years in the United States and his intellectual re-formation in an American graduate school.

His inquiry starts from the premise so eloquently expressed in his title: that to Soviet citizens, the Soviet system seemed unchanging and eternal – until it suddenly disappeared. 'Although the system's collapse had been unimaginable before it began, it appeared unsurprising when it happened.' That is the book's initial paradox. During the perestroika period, many of his informants reported experiencing 'a sudden "break of consciousness" and "stunning shock" … quickly followed by excitement and readiness to participate in the transformation'. Strangely enough, this epiphany did not typically occur in a public setting, or in response to some dramatic event. It usually

took place while reading, and resulted in more reading. Perestroika, which made possible the publication of all sorts of hitherto inaccessible work, from the religious philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev to George Orwell and Nabokov, is described by Yurchak as primarily a 'discursive deconstruction' of the late Soviet system. He in turn wants to look at discourse – both the formal discourse of newspaper editorials and politicians' speeches and the way 'normal people' talked in public and to each other – to explain his opening paradox.

Yurchak is critical of Western scholarship's assumption that everything in the Soviet Union was 'bad' and 'immoral', and so regarded by its citizens; that Soviet citizens were brainwashed into believing what 'the regime' taught them; and that those who rejected Soviet discourse were substituting 'truth' for 'lies'. He also dislikes the idea that Soviet culture was strictly divided into 'official' and 'unofficial', public and private, and that people used distinct voices, languages and value systems in the two contexts. Yurchak isn't keen on 'binaries'. But it's more than a binary that makes him dislike the idea that Soviet-style socialism 'was based on a complex web of immoralities'. As he sees it, socialism (in the way Soviet Russians understood it) was a moral system, and it was alive and surprisingly well in the late Soviet period. According to his informants, the socialist value system, which people regarded as both theirs and Soviet, embraced such fundamental values and ideals as 'equality, community, selflessness, altruism, friendship, ethical relations, safety, education, work, creativity and concern for the future'. His informants didn't of course think that these values were fully and consistently expressed, either in everyday life or in official ideological pronouncements, which they often found boring and formalistic. Igor, a provincial Komsomol organiser in the late 1970s, despised the Komsomol's 'tedious formalism' yet he felt 'personally invested in what he saw as its collective ethos and concern for the common good'; his parents were both doctors, and he saw the government's basic concern as 'caring for people, free hospitals, good education'. Mikhail, similarly, 'had always thought' that the 'actual idea' of socialism was 'profoundly correct and that this was how things should be … I had realised,' he said, 'that there were distortions … But I thought that if we managed to get rid of them everything would be great.'

A key term in Yurchak's analysis is 'authoritative discourse', which for the lay reader means something like 'the Party line'. For theorists, it is a Bakhtinian concept used to describe discourse that has a special autonomous status, independent of other

discourses, which have no power to 'interfere with its code and change it' but must 'refer to it, quote it, praise it, interpret it, apply it'; authoritative discourse, consequently, is experienced as something that can't be questioned, as immutable. Once upon a time, Yurchak says, it was considered important that people stick to the substance as well as the rhetoric of the Party line. But by the post-Stalin period all that had changed: 'the performative dimension of authoritative discourse started to play a much greater role than its constative dimension' – i.e. all that mattered was using the right form of words. Soviet authoritative language was formal, stilted and highly stylised. It involved frequent quotation, not just from the masters of Marxism-Leninism, but also from itself; often whole blocks of language were borrowed from one authoritative text for use in another. Certain constructions became obligatory; argument had to be structured in a certain way; particular nouns had their own correct adjectives.

This was the language not just of newspapers and ideological pronouncements but of public life at all levels, and its clichés found their way (often with ironic and parodic inflections) into informal Soviet talk as well. Sometimes, as we know, people resented having to reproduce Soviet authoritative discourse. But Yurchak shows – and this is one of his original and useful contributions – that they often enjoyed it, for its rhetorical élan when performed straight or in the equally popular parody version. Masha, a high-school Komsomol committee member in Kaliningrad in the mid-1980s, fell in love with authoritative discourse early on ('Even as a child I was always impressed by such serious and unclear phraseology') and learned to reproduce it so well that 'often I would be unable to explain what I wrote in my own words.'

Authoritative discourse had to be used in any official context, from a *Pravda* editorial to a district Komsomol meeting or a school essay on Lenin. This meant that everybody had to master it, and one of Yurchak's questions is why and in what spirit they did this. While even Komsomol secretaries often regarded reproduction of the discourse as empty formalism, Yurchak believes that this did not imply complete cynicism and indifference to socialist ideology, for it was possible – indeed, normal – to make a mental separation between ritual and values. The question, 'Do you support the resolution?', which always had to be answered affirmatively, had nothing to do with substance; according to Yurchak, its real meaning was: 'Are you the kind of people who understand that the norms and rules of the current ritual need to be performatively

reproduced?' When local Komsomol secretaries appealed to others to fulfil ritual requirements (attend meetings, vote for resolutions, turn out for parades), their appeal was often based on friendship and group solidarity: in effect, 'Don't make waves so that we can all have a quiet life and/or get on with the things we really want to do.'

Although in theory all Komsomol officers were 'activists', by the late Soviet period the term was reserved in ordinary speech for the minority of enthusiasts whose insistence on literal reading of content as well as strict observance of form was an embarrassment to the Komsomol majority, who considered themselves 'normal people' – neither 'activists' nor 'dissidents'. 'Dissidents' were even more of a minority than activists; in fact, hardly any 'normal people' ever met a real dissident, although they knew about them from the newspapers. They did, however, know a few individuals with dissident inclinations (*dissidentstvuiushchie*), and generally perceived them to be sick people, with 'a screw loose'.

A good deal of Yurchak's story has to do with alternative lifestyles, fascination with the West, rock music and jokes: late Soviet phenomena that scholars often put in the category of 'resistance'. Yurchak dislikes this idea because it involves a 'them' and 'us' binary and implies that rock enthusiasts and joke-tellers were necessarily anti-Soviet. In his view, Soviet structures not only tolerated but actually 'enabled' such informal activities. He points out that some of the distinctive milieux that emerged in the late Soviet period – the privileged world of Dubna's theoretical physicists, for example – were generously supported by the state. 'Authoritative discourse' encouraged interest in the West in some contexts and discouraged it in others. Some foreign broadcasts were jammed even as (state) production of shortwave radios soared, along with that of tape-recorders (*magnitofony*), which made possible the rapid nationwide dissemination of Western pop.

This argument is generally convincing, though it shouldn't be pushed too far. With regard to jokes (*anekdoty*), it's true that in the great age of joke-telling from the 1960s to the late 1980s, there were a few jokes about dissidents to offset the thousands of 'anti-Soviet' jokes, and true, too, that many of the jokes about the quirks of Soviet life were not 'anti-Soviet' in the way Westerners thought, being wryly directed against 'us' rather than bitterly against 'them' (the regime). No doubt Yurchak is right, too, to reject the crude assumption that any young adult who wanted to play Red Indians in an imagined American West (a weird fantasy game of the 1980s and early 1990s

described by the anthropologist Jennifer Rayport Rabodzeenko) or spend all day talking philosophy in Leningrad's Café Saigon was ipso facto rejecting socialism and the Soviet regime, or indeed making any kind of political comment. Yet it's not unreasonable to regard dropping out as a kind of resistance – as in the 'boiler room' phenomenon, in which young people gave up professional careers in favour of jobs as watchmen, loaders and street-sweepers so as to have more time to pursue their intellectual and cultural interests unimpeded. 'Enabled' may be too active a verb for the role that official Soviet institutions and discourse played in the proliferation of new ideas and practices in the late Soviet period; I would say that these developed, as Frederick Starr put it, in the 'interstices' of official structures. Working with the monolithic concept of 'authoritative discourse', Yurchak is too inclined to make a monolith of Soviet institutions. Where there was simultaneous official discouragement and encouragement, this was often because one Soviet institution discouraged while another (whether because of policy disagreement or simple lack of attention) did the opposite.

Perhaps the most interesting chapter in the book, and the one that best illustrates Yurchak's thesis that people who responded to the new in the late Soviet period were not necessarily rejecting what they understood as socialism, is the one about rock music. Rock was often condemned as a degenerate Western import in Soviet authoritative discourse (Yurchak publishes in its entirety a wonderful official document from 1985 listing various pop groups whose songs were 'ideologically harmful' in various ways: the Sex Pistols – 'punk, violence'; Pink Floyd – 'distortion of Soviet foreign policy'; Tina Turner – 'sex' and so on). But the 'last Soviet generation' fell in love with rock. 'Normal people', including local Komsomol officers, often did not take the official condemnation seriously; and Soviet institutions often 'enabled' the craze by providing venues for rock concerts. The interesting point that emerges from Yurchak's data is how firmly some enthusiasts rejected the idea that rock and Soviet values were incompatible, and how unworried they were when ideologists said the opposite. Andrei, a Komsomol secretary in Leningrad, believed in socialism – he retrospectively described his gradual loss of belief in the late 1980s as his 'personal tragedy' – but accepted only part of the official position on bourgeois popular culture (he agreed that capitalism tended to commodify art, but not that rock was evil or anti-Soviet) and was an enthusiastic organiser of rock concerts. Alexandr from Novosibirsk

said that 'the building of Communism is the task of my life,' yet regularly bought rock records on the black market with no sense of incongruity. For him, as for many of his generation, rock was a gateway to 'deep truths' as well as an avant-garde aesthetic perfectly compatible with Communism, with its orientation towards the future. Told that a Soviet professor of aesthetics considered rock trivial, Alexandr responded (using impeccable SovietSpeak in a private letter to a friend) that she must be a 'dogmatist' without vision or imagination who 'lagged behind' his generation.

Yurchak's general theory about the enabling function of authoritative discourse becomes clearer when we look at the case that may be closest to his heart, its reproduction in a particular genre of absurdist humour known by the slang word *styop* (*stiob* in Yurchak's American transliteration, but the English version is truer to pronunciation: a crisp one-syllable *styop*). *Styop*, a late Soviet product, was 'a peculiar form of irony that differed from sarcasm, cynicism, derision, or any of the more familiar genres of absurd humour. It required such a degree of *overidentification* with the object, person or idea at which [it] was directed that it was often impossible to tell whether it was a form of sincere support, subtle ridicule, or a peculiar mixture of the two.' *Styop* was often used to comic effect in private correspondence, mock-formal invitations and so on. It became famous, at least in avant-garde circles, through its deployment by a Slovene rock group, Laibach, and a Russian one, AVIA (Yurchak was once its manager). Laibach's specialty was to overidentify with the 'serious, heroic, and slightly terrifying part of Communist symbolism', mixing this with some Nazi 'Blut und Boden' symbols, but in a way that was more suggestive of punk than politics. AVIA drew on specifically Soviet imagery: in its 'performances up to twenty actors in workers' overalls fervently marched in columns, shouted slogans and "hurray", and built human pyramids. In the role of "young builders of Communism" they looked so cheerfully zealous that sometimes it all verged on insanity.' Some people thought AVIA pro-Soviet, others anti, but in Yurchak's opinion both were wrong. What can confidently be said is that AVIA – like the omnipresent *anekdoty* of the Brezhnev period – was a deeply Soviet phenomenon in the sense that without Soviet authoritative discourse it couldn't have existed.

Does all this help to explain Yurchak's initial paradox? Yes, insofar as he shows how an increasingly detached way of reproducing authoritative discourse could prepare the ground for an apparently sudden repudiation of it. But does his argument really work?

Perhaps, as he would have it, the Soviet collapse was a totally hermetic, circular process whereby 'the more the immutable forms of the system's authoritative discourse were reproduced everywhere, the more the system was experiencing a profound internal displacement … Reproducing the system and participating in its continuous internal displacement were mutually constitutive.' Yet the perestroika that Gorbachev initiated was surely an intervention, not part of a circular process; and one would have to be very committed to a belief in the 'primacy of language' to accept the notion that the 'profound internal displacement' within the Soviet system that led to its collapse had only discursive causes.

Yurchak doesn't so much argue the idealist case as take it for granted: untypically, he fails even to cite theoretical authority for his position. The reason, perhaps, is that the primacy of language is one of the givens of the postmodern theory in which he was educated at graduate school. Or, to put it another way, it is the cornerstone of the Western academic 'authoritative discourse' of postmodernism. I found Yurchak's explication of authoritative discourse quite illuminating in this context, as well as the Soviet one. To understand postmodernism's obsessive habits of citation and intertextuality, its esoteric lexicon and striking deference to authority – to grasp why, to paraphrase Bakhtin, it is imperative always to refer to the canonical theoretical works, quote them, praise them, interpret them and apply them – we clearly need a theoretical paradigm that has so far been lacking. Take Masha, the Komsomol leader with an aptitude for Soviet authoritative language who 'memorised a lot of phraseology and learned how to create special constructions instead of the ordinary ones used in everyday language'. Consciously or not, she was seeking both to bond with the community of users of this particular authoritative discourse (the Soviet equivalent of the Masonic handshake) and to appropriate some of the mysterious power of the ritual itself:

by meticulously citing these multiple levels of authoritative form, from concrete phrases and words, to structural principles, temporal modalities, and voices, Masha gained access to Bourdieu's 'delegated power of the spokesperson'. The more faithful the language of her speeches and reports was to the authoritative form, the more she inhabited the position of 'authorised spokesperson' of the ideological institution and therefore the more she was endowed with its 'delegated' power.

Without labouring the analogy between Masha's deployment of authoritative discourse in one world and Yurchak's in another, it may be helpful to turn once again to Yurchak's useful concept of *styop*. Yurchak's work might be considered a *styop* tour de force, a performance in which mastery of Postmodern discourse wins admiration regardless of content, were it not for the fact that the book is full of new and interesting ideas. *Styop* is the wrong idiom for that, and Yurchak is doing himself and his readers a disservice by so extravagantly wrapping his message in theory. At the risk of intertextual ambiguity, I cannot resist a final word of advice:*styop* it.

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Letters

Vol. 28 No. 12 · 22 June 2006

Sheila Fitzpatrick describes my position in *Everything Was For Ever, Until It Was No More*, as 'postmodern', which she takes to be the belief that there is no reality outside language or discourse (*LRB*, 25 May). In fact, my book argues the exact opposite: not only that there is a real world outside language, and that it is impossible for language ever to account for that world in full, but that this is precisely why alternative realities and internal displacements were part of late socialism yet remained 'invisible' (unaccounted for in language) until the collapse of the Soviet state. Some 'postmodern' theories reduce reality to language and Soviet socialism to postmodernism (e.g. Mikhail Epstein's model), but I argue that Soviet people were able 'to engage in the production of new forms and meanings of reality that were tangible, multiple and grounded in the real world … Contrary to Epstein's claim that "reality that differed from the ideology simply ceased to exist," that different reality, in fact, exploded into the Soviet world in powerful, multiple and unanticipated forms.' Fitzpatrick is incorrect, too, that the book's object is to study the causes of the collapse of the Soviet Union. She claims that 'one would have to be very committed to a belief in the "primacy of language" [her phrase] to accept the notion that the "profound internal displacement" [my phrase] within the Soviet system that led to its collapse had only discursive causes.' In fact, my book neither argues for the primacy of language nor claims that the internal displacement of the late Soviet system had 'only discursive causes'. Instead, it argues that this displacement was a product of a particular relationship between authoritative discourse and the forms of social reality for which it could not fully account. Furthermore, the book's object of analysis is not 'the causes for the collapse but … the conditions that made the collapse possible without making it

anticipated'. The question is not what led to the collapse, but why it was not expected.

Finally, according to Fitzpatrick, I claim that 'the Soviet collapse was a totally hermetic, circular process.' The book does not make this claim, which she nonetheless goes on to dispute: 'The perestroika that Gorbachev initiated was surely an intervention, not part of a circular process.' In fact, the point of the book's theoretical argument is that perestroika was not part of the circular process. Gorbachev, I wrote, 'unwittingly broke with the circular structure of authoritative discourse' and reintroduced 'the voice of an external commentator or editor of ideology who could provide expert metadiscourse grounded in "objective scientific knowledge" located outside the field of authoritative discourse.'

It is Fitzpatrick's slighting of theory that causes these problems. To understand major social ruptures – in this case, why the Soviet collapse was so unexpected, not only by Soviet citizens but also by external analysts and scholars – requires both empirical investigation and theoretical consideration, not the one rather than the other.

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Terkinesque

Sheila Fitzpatrick

- *The Soviet Century* by Moshe Lewin, edited by Gregory Elliott
Verso, 416 pp, £25.00, February 2005, ISBN 1 84467 016 3

When I was growing up in Australia in the late 1950s and 1960s, the displaced European intellectual turned academic was a familiar figure on university campuses. Refugees from totalitarian and wartime Europe, conversant with Marx and Weber, polyglot and multilingual (but always with strongly accented English), veterans of complicated doctrinal wars in the sectarian world of European socialism, these rumpled figures, whom it was impossible to imagine had ever been young, provoked awed attention in some students and light-hearted mockery in others. For those who attended, there was an aura of mystery and suffering about these postwar refugees, who had lost country, family and possessions, and suffered multiple uprootings; they dwelt among the innocent – or at any rate ignorant – Australian young as exemplars of European experience and its burdens. Small groups of disciples clustered around them,

absorbing political philosophy and an eye-witness view of the 20th-century history of Germany, Eastern Europe or the Soviet Union. Charismatic and demanding to the initiated, uncomfortable with outsiders and ultra-sensitive to slights, these Europeans taught their disciples political tactics too, including Leninist conspiracy, though their politics were usually strongly anti-Communist.

Moshe Lewin's politics are different, and fate never landed him in Australia. Yet he has something in common with these figures from my youth, starting with a kind of gnomic (in both senses) charisma, an exotic life story, a first-hand view of Soviet history, and the crucial ability to personify European experience for Anglo-American disciples – in his case, mainly Marxists from the New Left of the 1970s – who feel the lack of it. Born in 1921 in what was then Wilno in Poland (later Vilnius, first in the Soviet Union and then in independent Lithuania), he was active as a young man in a variety of left-wing Zionist politics that favoured a binational Jewish state, with equal rights for Jews and Arabs. When the Germans advanced in June 1941, he fled eastwards and spent five years in provincial Russia, working in mines, factories and collective farms before ending up in the Soviet army, in training to be an officer. From the moment in 1941 when Red Army soldiers allowed the fleeing Lewin and his friends to climb onto their trucks in defiance of their officers' instructions, he felt a kinship with the Russian people. As he said in a 1982 interview, Vasilii Terkin, the unheroic hero of Alexander Tvardovsky's vastly popular wartime poem of that name, a kind of Good Soldier Schweik whose survival skills coexisted with a bedrock layer of Soviet patriotism, 'really meant something for every Russian – and for me too. I knew therefore that if I ever had the chance to write history, it would be the history of those popular layers.'[*]

After the war, Lewin spent a few years in Poland and France before moving in 1951 to Israel, where he worked on a kibbutz and as a journalist for ten years, received a BA from Tel Aviv University, and made his first serious study of Marxism. However, as an old-fashioned idealistic Zionist, he was out of sympathy with the direction of Israeli politics, and in 1961, he left for the Sorbonne. There, he became acquainted with the Annales school and wrote the dissertation that was the basis for his *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power*, published in French in 1966 and in English in 1968, the same year that he moved to England as a research professor at the Centre for Russian and East European Studies in Birmingham. Lewin's international reputation as a Soviet

historian was made in the Birmingham years, but his status as a guru for the Marxist wing of Soviet historical 'revisionism' came mainly after his relocation to the University of Pennsylvania in the late 1970s.

In *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power*, Lewin (like the sociologist Teodor Shanin) addressed the Marxist debate about the kulaks: did an exploiting class of peasants such as the term implied exist in Russia and, by extension, was the collective victim in the Soviet 'dekulakisation' of the late 1920s some actual 'kulak class' or the Soviet peasantry as a whole? Lewin believes in the objective existence of classes in general, but not this one: he saw the whole peasantry as the victim. *Lenin's Last Struggle*, published in French in 1967 and in English the following year, presented a democratic and gradualist Lenin, struggling during his last illness against the 'oligarchic' tendencies he only now perceived in the Communist Party leadership, and fighting with Stalin, whose fellow oligarchs had given him the thankless task of seeing that Lenin obeyed doctors' orders and kept out of politics. In Lewin's picture, Lenin and Stalin were hopelessly divided on issues of political principle, though to be sure the issues on which they quarrelled might seem rather secondary, and it was not easy to square this democratic, gradualist Lenin with the man who had insisted on seizing power, against the advice of all around him, in 1917. In its insistence on the gulf between Lenin and Stalin,*Lenin's Last Struggle* was a book that was in tune with the emerging trend towards de-Stalinisation in the Soviet Union (Roy Medvedev's *Let History Judge*, for example, combined denunciation of the evils of Stalinism with endorsement of the 'Leninist norms' of an earlier era) as well as appealing to young American 'revisionist' scholars like Stephen Cohen, who wanted to decouple Leninism and Stalinism in order to rescue the former from the stigma of 'totalitarianism'.

Lewin's next book, dauntingly entitled *Political Undercurrents in Soviet Economic Debates*, had Nikolai Bukharin – the doomed intellectual whom Lenin called 'the Party favourite' – as its hero, and offered Bukharin's thoughts on the economy of the 1920s as a guide to would-be economic reformers of the 1970s. Written in the hope that the Revolution would finally be salvaged and the Soviet Union get back on track, it resembled one of Lewin's most engaging works, *The Gorbachev Phenomenon* (1988), which offered a brilliant overview of socio-economic developments in the Soviet Union from Stalin's death to perestroika. Between the two came *The Making of the Soviet System* (1985), which included Lewin's major statement on the nature of Stalinist

society (in the essays ‘Society, State and Ideology during the First Five-Year Plan’ and ‘The Social Background of Stalinism’). The themes here were social flux and upheaval (‘the quicksand society’), the ‘peasantisation’ of cities, and – with a considerable debt to Trotsky’s *Revolution Betrayed* and Djilas’s *New Class* – the growth of bureaucracy and bureaucratism, meaning both the emergence of a new privileged class and the strangling of the revolutionary impulse.

Despite the interest he expresses in the experience of ‘the popular layers’, Lewin’s contribution as a historian has not been in the realm of everyday life. Structures (especially class structures) and directions of structural change are central in his work. He is at his best writing about the relationship between social and political development, on the one hand, and economic, on the other, with frequent recourse to statistics as a basis for his analysis. At the same time, the injection of personal experience lends a note of authority to his work: Lewin has the distinction of having been in his own person a Soviet peasant, worker and soldier, not to mention an intellectual, thus achieving, in his five-year stay in Russia, membership of all the canonical class categories of Soviet society. There is an infectious sweep to his writing, a fairly cavalier attitude to such academic conventions as citation of sources and acknowledgment of other scholarly work, and a generous scattering of Russian words (not always translated). Unlike many Marxists working on Soviet social history, he deals sympathetically with peasants (as long as they remain in situ) and has never been much interested in the proletariat and its putative ‘leading’ role. In his picture, Russia was a peasant country whose rapid modernisation produced ‘peasantised’ cities and – to its detriment – a bureaucracy of the same sort.

Lewin’s best genre has always been the long essay rather than the monograph. Many of his books – including the most influential of them, *The Making of the Soviet System*, and his last book before *The Soviet Century*, *Russia-USSR-Russia* (1995) – are collections of essays, more or less linked by common themes. The 1995 volume was a lively and readable overview, organised more or less chronologically; it must have helped many non-specialist readers understand the dramatic changes Russia underwent in the 20th century. *The Soviet Century*covers much the same ground, but less successfully. Historiographically, the context is purely Russian: never a great reader of the work of other Western scholars, Lewin now admits (somewhat apologetically) to ignoring it almost completely. The book is essentially a grab-bag of

his summaries of and responses to various interesting documents that have emerged from the Russian archives in the last ten years, along with a few interpretative essays that have caught his attention. The publication of archival documents – generously subsidised by various Western foundations, and providing a haven for Russian scholars trying to find their feet in a newly internationalised and commercialised world – has indeed been one of the great post-Soviet boons to historians, and *The Soviet Century* provides evidence that Lewin is still keeping up. But it doesn't amount to a coherent narrative, and – a result, it would seem, of poor editing – a number of the most interesting documents discussed are unsourced.

That said, Verso surely published Lewin's manuscript – and went to the trouble of getting Gregory Elliott to edit it – out of respect for a man who is not only a major scholar of Soviet history but also a figure of distinction in the world of radical historians. On the assumption that many people will approach the book wanting to know how he has reacted to recent developments and archival discoveries in Russia, and whether these have led him to modify his earlier analyses, the first thing to say is that he is still in his own way a Leninist. That means that he feels strongly that Leninism and Stalinism are totally different entities and that Stalin hijacked the Revolution and took it somewhere Lenin would never have wanted it to go. It also means that he defends the argument of *Lenin's Last Struggle* that the late Lenin was a convert to democracy and gradualism; indeed, the new book contains additional data on the various policy disagreements between Lenin and Stalin in the last years of Lenin's life which are intended to buttress that argument. Lewin's account of Lenin's and Stalin's interactions is very different from the one given by Robert Service in his biographies, and to my mind less persuasive. As before, Lewin does not address the apparent contradiction between his moderate Lenin and the revolutionary Lenin who seized power half a decade earlier, nor does he address the new material on Lenin's more bloodthirsty and ruthless side (see *The Unknown Lenin*, edited by Richard Pipes) or even the human side uncovered by Service.

Lewin might also be called Leninist in his analysis of what went wrong with the Soviet Union: bureaucratism spoiled everything. 'Bureaucracy' has always been a dirty word in Soviet vocabulary, and all Soviet leaders (with the exception of Brezhnev) liked to take a bash at it. In Lenin's time, the main issue about bureaucracy was that the state administration was largely staffed by holdovers from tsarist times who could not be

trusted to advance the Bolsheviks' goals even if they professed to accept them; to circumvent this, Lenin suggested various forms of proletarian promotion and inspection which, not surprisingly, failed to solve the problem. When Lenin spoke of bureaucratism, he almost never meant the Communist Party bureaucracy, though such a thing already existed in his lifetime; and Lewin follows Lenin in making a sharp distinction (for the whole of the Soviet period) between the state's bureaucracy and the Party's.

In the post-Lenin period, Lewin's story follows Trotsky's and Djilas's lead, seeing the bureaucracy as a 'new class' that subverted the Revolution and was increasingly prone to corruption. (Unlike Trotsky, though, he thinks Stalin was more than its 'creature'.) The accusation of corruption was commonly made by the Communist elite against 'enemies of the people' during the Great Purges, but Lewin does not address this. Instead, he seems to date its significant onset from the postwar period (though this may be an unintended inference; it could be pure accident that the pertinent document – no source indicated – happens to come from 1946). Lewin gives better marks to Khrushchev than most commentators for his efforts to combat bureaucratisation, but these were largely unavailing; and under Brezhnev, corruption blossomed and bureaucratic inertia was sufficient to block any reforms, including those Kosygin proposed for the economy. Finally, Lewin throws out the intriguing suggestion that corruption had risen to such a level that the 'privatisation' of state assets essentially occurred before perestroika and the collapse of the Soviet Union.

This sober summary of Lewin's account of the irresistible rise of Soviet bureaucracy misses some of its flavour. When he punctures the pretensions and foibles of Soviet bureaucrats, he does so with a certain mischief and sense of pleasure. The tone of his anti-bureaucratic writing is not so much Leninist or Trotskyist as Terkinesque: in a sequel to the wartime poem circulated in samizdat in the 1970s under the title 'Terkin in the Other World', Terkin found himself locked in endless battle with bureaucratic idiocy and inflexibility. Terkin's creator, the poet Tvardovsky, was also editor of the loyal opposition journal of the 1960s, *Novyi mir*, of which Lewin is a great admirer. As a *Novyi mir* Soviet socialist at heart, Lewin has little time for the journal's sometime protégé and later harsh critic, Alexander Solzhenitsyn – or, for that matter, the whole dissident movement of the 1970s, which was 'used … for its own purposes' by the West.

Stalin and Stalinism are still Lewin's bugbears, and he draws a firm distinction between Stalinism and what preceded and followed it. He is sharply opposed to '"Stalinising" the whole Soviet phenomenon, as if it had been one giant gulag from beginning to end'. Stalin, whom Lewin thinks felt 'profound hostility' to Lenin (a dubious assertion, in my view), was never a real Leninist but an interloper who got power by fooling and outmanoeuvring his competitors. The gulag receives considerable attention, Lewin's main points being that the numbers of prisoners, though high, were not as high as some Cold War scholarship claimed (this is convincing, and has already been argued by Arch Getty and others) and that the system was effectively dismantled after Stalin's death (he slightly overstates his case here, since the huge outflows of the 1950s were partially offset by substantial inflows, though not of 'politicals', in the Khrushchev period). The Stalinist regime does turn out to have had one virtue in Lewin's eyes, however: it was better at dealing with bureaucratisation than the Soviet leadership before or after it. Lewin writes that Stalin relied on 'tough, authoritarian taskmasters (Stalin called them "commanders"), forming a ruling stratum (*nachal'stvo*) whose structural hierarchy covered the whole system. They were supported and flattered, but not allowed to settle down and stabilise their position. This was something peculiar to the Stalinist dictatorship, which would be abandoned after it.'

There are a couple of surprises for Lewin-watchers. First, the Party appears in a rather benign light, as the ginger group which at least sometimes fought the good fight against bureaucratism until its extinction as a principled political force in the Brezhnev era. Second, Bukharin, whom Lewin once saw as the standard-bearer of a viable and principled socialist alternative, has fallen from favour and hardly makes it into these pages. Even more striking is the near total omission of Gorbachev: the former 'phenomenon' has been downgraded to a '"classical" general-secretary', operating via manipulation of his colleagues, whose downfall was 'as pitiful as his rise had been meteoric'.

What was the nature of the Soviet system? 'Not socialist', is Lewin's answer – one that harks back to a long tradition on the left of agonising over this essentialist (and essentially unanswerable) question – because 'socialism involves ownership of the means of production by society, not by a bureaucracy.' He adds that socialism 'has always been conceived of as a deepening – not a rejection – of political democracy', an

agentless formulation that leaves one slightly uneasy. In any case, the Bolshevik Revolution is still in Lewin's eyes a noble if flawed world-historical event. If what it gave birth to was not socialism, it wasn't totalitarianism either, a concept that Lewin judges conceptually inadequate because of its 'blatant disregard for the social dimension'. 'Bureaucratic absolutism' is one characterisation of the Soviet system that Lewin offers, meaning that 'the Party's top bosses, putative masters of the state, had actually lost any power over "their" bureaucrats'; at other times he writes of the old Russian autocratic state (for which he coins the term 'agrarian despotism') as a significant progenitor. And yet, bureaucratic and/or autocratic as the Soviet state may have been, Lewin has some nostalgia for it, in particular for the Khrushchev period, when change for the better still seemed possible and the reforming ideas of socialist intellectuals mattered.

Lewin promises a 'more systematic' work on Soviet history for the future; he even touchingly undertakes to read the Western scholarly literature before writing it. But is that really necessary? Lewin's great strength has always been his 'I was there' perspective. He has told us a lot about 'there' over the years, but what about that interesting but still elusive 'I'? Let us hope that the next book Lewin gives us is his memoirs.

[*] The interview from which this quotation comes, conducted by Paul Bushkovitch for*Radical History Review* and published in *Visions of History* (1984), is an excellent source on Lewin's life and politics.

Pessimism and Boys

Sheila Fitzpatrick

- *The Diary of a Soviet Schoolgirl 1932-37* by Nina Lugovskaya, translated by Joanne Turnbull
  Glas, 215 pp, £8.99, October 2003, ISBN 0 571 72006 4

  To hell with the new society! It's only Gennady who can get wrapped up in it and spend hours reading what Lenin and Stalin said and about the achievements of our Soviet Union.

  Fourteen-year-old Nina Lugovskaya wrote this in her diary on 2 May 1933 (Gennady was a classmate). Four years later, the secret police confiscated the diary and arrested its author. When the NKVD men read it, they underlined this passage, along with other

heterodox thoughts. *Against the new society! Contemptuous of Soviet achievements!* And, on top of that, the daughter of a former socialist Revolutionary, a political opponent of the Bolsheviks with an arrest record going back to 1919, the year after Nina's birth. In fact, Nina's bad mood on 2 May was related to her father's travails: he had just been refused a Moscow residence permit and had had to move to Mozhaisk, a small provincial town not far away; and on this May Day holiday, Nina's mother had gone out to Mozhaisk to be with him. Nina was alone at home, 'dreary and sad'. It was the first time she had missed the big holiday demonstration. 'I heard the orchestra playing the march and, somewhere in the distance, cries of "Hurrah!",' she wrote plaintively.

Not that Nina wanted to go to the demonstration. She was, after all, a principled anti-Bolshevik. She was also a loner, prone to what she called 'pessimism' and 'sadness', quarrelling with her annoyingly popular and right-thinking twin sisters, not doing well at school, seeking escape in solitary writing. Irritable, charmless, self-conscious and endlessly introspective, Nina was Auden's frowning schoolgirl dying to be asked to stay. She particularly hoped for boys' attention, but even girls' friendship was hard to achieve. Nina didn't like being a girl: she wanted to be a 'great and extraordinary person', and how was that possible for a woman? Her father, and very likely all men, despised women ('it's good we don't have a brother: the difference between Papa's treatment of him and his treatment of us would have been colossal'). In any case, Nina thought herself 'ugly', with crossed eyes that an operation had failed to correct, and 'messy hair sticking out over my ears'. Despising conventional femininity, she also wished she could be charming and flirtatious like her friend Ira, 'not disfigured like me, thinking about equality, demanding to be treated as a person'.

Nina is not the only Stalinist adolescent whose diary has come down to us, but she is one of the most singular personalities. The historians Jochen Hellbeck and Igal Halfin have suggested that Soviet citizens in the 1930s had no choice but to think within a Soviet framework because no other was available, just as they had no language other than 'Sovietspeak' in which to express their thoughts. If they kept diaries, these historians suggest, it was almost always part of a self-conscious discipline aimed at producing the New Soviet Person and eliminating all traces of the pre-Soviet one. *Bildungs* diaries of this sort exist: that of the kulak's son Stepan Podlubnyi was published in German in 1996 by Hellbeck as*Tagebuch aus Moskau*; and schools and

the Komsomol probably encouraged young people to keep them. But Nina's diary is another thing altogether.

Adults tended to be wary about writing diaries in the Stalin period – too dangerous, if the NKVD came round – and were liable to destroy them at times of high political tension. Of the diaries that have come down to us, some survived thanks to NKVD confiscation and subsequent archiving. That is probably the case with Nina's diary, which was found a few years ago in the Russian State Archives by Irina Osipova and subsequently published by her with seemingly minimal editing. This alone puts the diary in a different class from earlier publications such as *The Diary of Nina Kosterina* (translated by Mirra Ginsburg in 1968), which, like Anne Frank's diary, had to pass a father's editorial scrutiny as well as that of the Soviet censor.

Our Nina, Nina Lugovskaya, was a prisoner in a Kolyma labour camp in 1941, the year Nina Kosterina was killed while fighting as a volunteer in the Home Guard outside Moscow. Nina K. was a happy, gregarious, confident girl until her father's arrest as an 'enemy of the people' in 1937 sent her life spinning into confusion and misery. For both Ninas, the main point of their diaries was to record and explore their emotions, though Nina K. nods to the Soviet*Bildung* agenda from time to time. This kind of diary is, by definition, secret – or, in Nina K.'s case, a secret that can be revealed selectively to intimates. Diary-showing as a form of emotional communication seems to have been a familiar practice in Soviet schools. Nina L., who had real secrets and few close friends, never engaged in it, but wistfully noted it in others. 'Levka showed Ira his diary,' she recorded enviously. 'I wish I could read it!'

The basic themes of Nina L.'s diary were, in her own words, 'pessimism and boys, boys and pessimism'. 'Pessimism' (depression) was a fundamental condition of her life between the ages of 13 and 16: irritation, boredom, misery, a feeling of futility and emptiness, disgust at herself and an anguished sense of being unattractive pervade the diary's early years. She sought solitude and tried to escape into daydreaming. Her father was impatient, construing her depression as laziness and self-centredness; her mother, according to Nina, didn't understand her feelings and was anyway too busy to pay attention. Nina wrote repeatedly about suicide, and in October 1934, deciding that poison was the best solution, took a vial marked 'opium' from her grandmother's medicine cabinet and drank it. The opium turned out to be diluted, however, and the suicide attempt was both unsuccessful and unnoticed.

Boys, to Nina's shame and embarrassment, were a constant preoccupation. She had a crush on her schoolmate, Levka, from the very beginning of the diary. As she got older and her elder sisters started bringing home boyfriends and having parties, there were more crushes, though none was reciprocated, and Nina at 18 was still without a boyfriend. Her interest in boys was 'excessive and silly', she wrote self-reproachfully at 15. But the next year it was just as bad. 'My thoughts are full of boys and compared to them everything else seems uninteresting and unimportant. When I read or study, I'm always thinking about someone, remembering his remarks . . . In school I'm always searching for someone with my eyes . . . If I happen to meet someone's glance a few times I can't help wondering: "Does he like me?"' This is about as close as Nina got to writing about sex, a topic generally absent from Soviet diaries.

At school, Nina was a troublemaker; analysing her class as a mix of hell-raisers and model pupils, she placed herself among the former. She was bored, irritable and (for reasons that are not clear) older than the rest of her class. 'We're behaving abominably in class,' she wrote in January 1935. 'Our fear of the teachers has disappeared to the point that we're often rude to them.' Then, in quasi-apology: 'It is so deadly dull in class without a commotion.' But her troublemaking also had its principled side. When the civics teacher boasted about Soviet achievements in higher education, she decided – heart pounding – to ask him an awkward question about the political purging of institutes, and got a bad grade as a result. She participated in a boycott of a classroom informer, and organised a petition when the school changed its day off. She almost got in real trouble (that is, the kind of trouble that involves the secret police) after a snowball fight landed her in the school director's office. When the director's questioning indicated a knowledge of the pupils' conversations and friendships, Nina was indignant (though not surprised) at the revelation that there were 'spies' in their midst.

Yet even in her most recalcitrant period, Nina half-thought she ought to be one of the good students. As university entrance approached, she started to work harder at school and enjoy it more. In one diary entry, she even wrote critically of the subaltern culture of anti-authoritarianism that she had earlier found exhilarating: 'We all want to annoy' the teachers, 'to play dirty tricks, and then refuse to say who did it rather than betray a friend (that is what earns our respect).' She added with a tinge of regret that 'we don't have the new, good attitude – what they now call the "Soviet attitude".'

Nina didn't often lapse into 'the Soviet attitude'. But when the Chelyuskin expedition was successfully rescued from the Arctic in the summer of 1934, and its members returned to a hero's welcome, Nina was close to joining the cheering crowds. She recorded the event in the only passage of pure Sovietspeak in the diary, noting that she 'wanted to cry for happiness and sympathy with these great heroes . . . to participate in the general celebration'. This is so unlike the usual Nina that it comes as a shock, but the reason soon becomes clear: boys. 'I used to laugh at sentimental girls in love with interesting heroes and celebrities,' she wrote ruefully, 'but how am I any better?' The object of her desire was the pilot Slepnyov, whose 'strong manly features and white peaked cap' so entranced her that she hung round his apartment building hoping to see him and stopped to look at his picture in every shop window. She salvaged her political principles with the acerbic remark that when a Soviet exploit failed, you didn't hear about it: 'Our government doesn't like to talk about the failures, it only likes to boast.'

Nina no doubt got her political principles from her father, though this inheritance somehow bypassed her twin sisters with whom she was always arguing 'about the times we're living in, about the state of the workers, about culture . . . They tried as hard as they could to defend the present state of affairs, while I refuted it . . . I will never be able to agree with them, to call the system we have now socialism or to consider the current horrors normal.' Nina's ideal was the old populist intelligentsia, those 'noble, idealistic people' whose dreams, she wrote, had been turned into a caricature by the Bolsheviks. She noted (with specific reference to her sisters) how poorly young people nowadays compared with the revolutionary youth of the last century. She loved her father, she wrote, 'when he's a revolutionary . . . a man of ideas, a man of action, a man who sticks steadfastly to his views and won't trade them for anything in the world'.

She remembered her intense 'anger and spite' when the police took her father away in 1929, when she was 11; and the diary is full of denunciations and invective against the Bolsheviks. Sometimes it's quite childish: 'Homework, my God, we have so much homework. What wretches the Bolsheviks are! They don't think about us at all, don't think that we're people too.' At other times it's a direct response to police actions: during a house search when she was 13, she 'stood out in the corridor and watched, chewing my nails and containing my rage and hatred'; at 14, cowering alone during an afternoon of persistent knocking on the door (which she refused to answer): 'I was so

scared I couldn't concentrate on anything. Damned Bolsheviks, I hate them! They're all hypocrites, liars and reprobates.'

The 1933 diary contains two striking passages of reportage and comment on Soviet society, in which Nina suddenly seems to stop writing like a child: 'A kilo of white bread costs 60 kopeks! A litre of kerosene costs 50!' she wrote on 21 August. 'Angry, hungry, tired people standing in lines berate the government and curse life. Not a word do you hear anywhere in defence of the hated Bolsheviks.' A detailed description followed of the commercial structures that gave the Soviet elite privileged access to goods. Ten days later, she wrote about famine in the Ukraine: cannibalism, refugees, the steppe overgrown with weeds, villages deserted after the inhabitants had fled in search of food. Like the 21 August entry, all this was underlined by the NKVD. In language as well as content these two entries seem out of character (though this is not flagged by the editor, and may have been missed by the NKVD as well), and it's unclear how she knew about conditions in the Ukraine. The likelihood is that she copied or paraphrased an item from the Menshevik *Socialist Herald* or some similar émigré publication. Although she never mentions her father bringing home this kind of material (which was, of course, illegal and dangerous to possess), the NKVD confiscated 'Socialist-Revolutionary literature' belonging to him in the same 1937 house search in which they took Nina's diary.

Nina realised that her diary was potentially dangerous. After her mother read it, fearing that it 'might contain something counter-revolutionary' and finding that it did, Nina crossed out some of the most dangerous passages (but left others intact). But her first, typically adolescent reaction was a stab of embarrassment that her mother had read what she'd written about boys. In an earlier entry she had said: 'What if the apartment is suddenly searched and it is confiscated because of my completely uncensored remarks about Stalin? And it winds up in the hands of the secret police? They'll read it and laugh at my amorous gibberish.'

In the event the NKVD didn't laugh when they read her diary, because they thought they had uncovered a serious 18-year-old counter-revolutionary. This is not quite as unreasonable as might at first appear. The NKVD was quite capable of underlining passages of grumbling and sarcasm in confiscated diaries that could have suggested counter-revolutionary activity only to the most paranoid policeman. In Nina's case, however, a literal reading would have given any security man grounds for anxiety.

Two entries were particularly incendiary. One recorded her reaction when her father was refused his Moscow residence permit, soon after returning from his first spell of exile in Siberia early in 1933. This is one of the passages Nina partially excised after her mother read the diary, but the excisions did not prevent her post-Soviet editor – or, presumably the NKVD – from deciphering much of the text. Filled with 'helpless rage' after the denial of the permit, Nina

began to cry. I ran around the room swearing. *I decided that I had to kill the bastards.* Ridiculous as that sounds, but it's no joke. For several days I dreamed for hours while lying in bed about *how I'd kill him. His promises, his dictatorship, the vile Georgian who has crippled Russia.* How can it be? *Great Russia and the great Russian people have fallen into the hands of a scoundrel.* Is it possible? That Russia, which for so many years fought for freedom and which finally attained it, that Russia *has suddenly enslaved itself.* I must kill him *as soon as possible! I must avenge myself and my father.*

The italics indicate her excisions.

Another vehement outbreak (not excised) was precipitated by the murder of Kirov at the end of 1934. The killing greatly alarmed the Soviet leadership and led to large-scale reprisals against former Oppositionists, former aristocrats and other undesirable categories. Though she shared the regime's (probably false) assumption that the assassin, Nikolaev, had been part of a conspiracy, Nina did not share the public grief. 'I felt glad: that means there's still a struggle going on, there are still organisations and real people. Not everyone is gobbling the slops of socialism.' She was indignant at the arrests and executions that followed the murder, comparing the situation to the panic that followed Alexander II's assassination – except that then there had been a furor over the execution of the six assassins. 'Why is no one incensed now? . . . What right do these Bolsheviks have to deal with the country and its people so cruelly and arbitrarily . . . To call Nikolaev a coward! He went willingly to his death for what he believed in, he was better than all those so-called leaders of the working class put together.'

By the time she was 17, Nina's long depression was lifting, she had some friends and a bit of a social life, she was enjoying school and looking forward to going to university, and the anti-Soviet outbursts in her diary were becoming rarer. 'I'm almost satisfied with my life,' she wrote in October 1936. 'I had to adapt and with every year this ability has grown in me.' She meant she had to adapt socially, but perhaps even ideological

adaptation was not out of the question. In the final year of her diary, Nina scarcely wrote about politics or public events, only about the personal. Summing up the year in her last diary entry, on 2 January 1937, she wrote that she had put her past failures and problems behind her: 'I'm looking ahead and only ahead.'

What lay ahead, however, was not university but the gulag. The outlook for families like Nina's had been darkening since Kirov's assassination. Her father was rearrested in autumn 1935, held in Butyrka prison for a few months, and then exiled again, this time to Kazakhstan. The Great Purges were already under way when, on 4 January 1937, the NKVD searched the Lugovskoy apartment and confiscated Nina's and Olga's diaries as well as their father's papers. Under interrogation after her arrest on 16 March, Nina could scarcely deny that she had an 'extremely hostile attitude towards the leaders of the Bolshevik Party and primarily towards Stalin', and even the accusation that she had 'terrorist designs on Stalin' was not too outlandish, given her fantasies of revenge. Diligently underlining the inflammatory passages of the diary, the NKVD created a plausible picture of a sworn enemy of the Soviet regime.

But that was not all. The NKVD's selective underlining produced a portrait of a 'degenerate' as well as a political enemy: a twisted, suicidal misanthrope; a Dostoevskian underground person, full of envy and malice towards the world. Nina's suicidal thoughts and attempted suicide were central to this representation, of course. In addition, all her philosophical reflections about the meaninglessness of life and the pervasiveness of deception and disappointment were underlined, as was her remark that 'physical disfigurement has deformed my soul.' Every hint of misanthropy was picked up: for example, her quotation from Lermontov on the boorishness of the unwashed masses (one can almost hear the NKVD man's mind ticking over: *Alienated from the masses!*) and her ironic comment that women are 'dogs who are trying to raise themselves up to their masters' (*Reactionary views on women's emancipation!*). These underlinings could have provided Maxim Gorky with fine material for one of his diatribes contrasting Dostoevskian decadence with Soviet life-affirmation.

It was typical of Stalinist police practice that not only Nina, the true anti-Soviet in the family, was arrested, but also her hard-working mother and right-thinking, 'life-affirming' sisters. (In their mug-shots, Nina looks defiant, the twins disoriented, and their mother resigned; touchingly, all three of the girls have 'messy hair sticking out over their ears'.) In a set of photographs at the end of the book, we see the twins fined

down to skin and bone shortly after their release from Kolyma in 1942. Nina is there, too, looking in better physical and mental shape than others in the family. And there is her husband, Viktor Templin, an artist and former political prisoner whom she married in exile in Magadan in the late 1940s. Remembering all the romantic disappointments of Nina's adolescent diary, it is a relief to see a husband – an educated man, judging by his photograph, perhaps even an idealist. The two of them spent their lives working as stage designers and landscape painters in various provincial towns, ending up in Vladimir.

What is one to make of a life like Nina's? A sense of the pity of it, the waste, the pointless brutality, is inescapable. But our attention, as readers, is focused on her tormented adolescence and cruelly interrupted transition to adulthood. She had four and a half decades of life after the gulag, but we know hardly anything of what she made of it. Her adult photographs show a woman of character. But she was a survivor, too, which probably meant that she further developed the ability to adapt, whose belated emergence was noted in her diary. But adaptation can mean many things. After Stalin's death, she sought rehabilitation, like other former political prisoners, and obtained it in March 1963. In a personal petition to Khrushchev, she explained her childish bitterness against Stalin as a product of the trauma of her father's arrests. This seems like a repudiation of her childhood self, though whether for pragmatic reasons or because of a real shift in convictions is not clear. After rehabilitation, she had some success as a painter, holding a solo show in 1977, which probably means that she had been admitted to the prestigious Union of Soviet Artists. 'Friends in Vladimir knew nothing of her prison past and recalled her as a reticent and kindly person,' the editor tells us.

Nina Lugovskaya-Templina died at 74 in 1993, surviving the Soviet Union by two years. Did she rejoice at the collapse of the Communist regime? Look hopefully towards post-Soviet democracy? Wax indignant at 'robber capitalism'? (After all, hers had been a socialist anti-Sovietism.) Fear change, like many of her contemporaries, even if it was 'for the better'? The historical record gives no answers to these questions.

The Good Old Days

Sheila Fitzpatrick

- *Summerfolk 1710-2000: A History of the Dacha* by Stephen Lovell
  Cornell, 259 pp, £18.95, April 2003, ISBN 0 8014 4071 8
- *Socialist Spaces: Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc* edited by David Crowley and Susan Reid
  Berg, 261 pp, £15.99, November 2002, ISBN 1 85973 533 9
- *Caviar with Champagne: Common Luxury and the Ideals of the Good Life in Stalin's Russia* byJukka Gronow
  Berg, 179 pp, £15.99, October 2003, ISBN 1 85973 633 5
- *The Unmaking of Soviet Life: Everyday Economies after Socialism* by Caroline Humphrey
  Cornell, 265 pp, £13.95, May 2002, ISBN 0 8014 8773 0

Who could ever forget everyday life in the old Soviet Union? The sheer oddness of the way the place functioned, the incongruity between functioning and pretension. The discomfort and inconvenience, the drabness, the constant shortages and roundabout ways of getting things, the ubiquity of pull and patronage, the insignificance of money, the awfulness of officials, the splendid company of friends talking philosophy around kitchen tables, the sense of being caught in a time warp that was supposed to be the future but felt like the past. When I first went to the Soviet Union as a British Council exchange student in 1966, I thought it was only foreigners who noticed the oddness of Soviet life. But it turned out that the locals, or at least the local intelligentsia, felt it too. 'If only we could have a normal life!' they would sigh, not just in Moscow but in Budapest and Prague as well. 'Normal' had once referred to the way things were before the Revolution, or in Eastern Europe before Sovietisation. By the 1970s, however, most people didn't know what that 'normal' was like and redefined it in terms of a Western lifestyle and culture that was not only unattainable but also hazily understood. Normality itself became a utopian concept.

Nothing ever changed in the old Soviet Union. That, at any rate, was how it seemed in the stolid smugness of the Brezhnev years, with the upheavals and terrors of Stalinism definitively in the past and the fleeting excitement of the post-Stalin Thaw long gone. Khrushchev's boast about the imminence of Communism was a joke. As a founding myth, the Russian Revolution was largely displaced by the Second World War, and the Brezhnev regime seemed more committed to gradualism than any Fabian. To be sure, in the postwar period the Baltic states and Eastern Europe received a Soviet-taught *Short Course* in revolution from above, featuring such prewar staples as collectivisation, terror against class enemies, affirmative action in education and

Socialist Realism in the arts. But in Eastern Europe in the 1970s and 1980s, the sense of the impossibility of change – of being held for eternity in the claustrophobic embrace of the Soviet elder brother – was even stronger than in the Soviet Union. There the older generation, at least, remembering Stalinism, could see some merit in a relatively benign stasis.

And then the unthinkable happened. Soviet power crumbled, first in Eastern Europe and then in the Soviet Union itself. In principle (as Soviet spokesmen used to say when they meant that the reality was more complex), the emergent nations of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union embraced democracy, the free market and Western culture; in principle, normal life could begin. In practice it wasn't so easy. The governmental anarchy and economic chaos that followed the collapse in the Soviet Union didn't seem normal at all. Mafias were not normal; neither were unemployment, pensions made worthless by inflation, and pornography being sold on the streets. Democracy was a good idea, but politics, it turned out, was a dirty business, best ignored if possible. It wasn't normal for life to be so disorderly and unpredictable; for everyday survival to be even harder for most people than it had been in the past.

Stephen Lovell's choice of the dacha as a prism through which to look at the changes in Russian society is inspired. His book is not light reading: the story is complex and he has done a lot of research (if readers want to try something less demanding first, they can go to his article, 'Soviet Exurbia: Dachas in Postwar Russia', in the Crowley and Reid collection).[1]But it shows Lovell to be a first rate social as well as cultural historian. Like his mentor, Catriona Kelly (whose recent study of Russian advice literature is an essential source for anyone interested in Russian and Soviet consumerism),[2] Lovell paints on a broad canvas, starting in the 18th century and going right through to the present.

The origins of the Russian dacha were aristocratic: in the early 18th century, Peter the Great gave his noble servitors plots of land on the road between St Petersburg and his new palace at Peterhof and required them to build (at their own expense) suitably impressive and well-landscaped country houses (hence the term *dacha*, meaning 'something given'). But it was as a bourgeois phenomenon of the late Imperial period that the dacha came into its own; and one of the great merits of Lovell's book is that it gives a sense of the continuity of the middle-class lifestyle across the Revolutionary divide. Like many bourgeois phenomena, the dacha has often had a bad press, with

dachniki lampooned as vulgar, snobbish, pretentious, unappreciative of the nature they claimed to worship, and accused of corrupting the peasantry by their presence. The dacha was a cut-price competitor of the noble estate (*usadba*) in the late Empire, and anyone with connections to the real thing was bound to despise it. Dachniki – or rather the economic changes that led a declining nobility to sell off their estates at the turn of the century and urban weekenders to use that land for dachas – are the off-stage villains in *The Cherry Orchard*. But Chekhov himself was a dachnik, as was another critic of the bourgeois dacha, Maxim Gorky. In time, dachniki, like the nobility before them, developed their own mythology about the land and the virtues of physical work, fresh air and exposure to the beauties of nature. In addition, dacha life became associated with qualities thought to be peculiarly Russian, such as sociability and hospitality.

The story of the dacha in the Soviet period is particularly interesting. Soviet dachas could be owned, which made them one of the few substantial forms of private property available. The appalling conditions that most people endured in their city apartments made escape to the dacha seem extremely attractive. In Stalin's time, dachas were mainly a perk of the Party and cultural elites, though a few ordinary mortals who had owned them before the Revolution managed to hang onto them (Nikita Mikhalkov's 1994 film *Burned by the Sun* gives a picture of elite dacha life in the 1930s, based on firsthand experience). Post Stalin, dacha ownership and use spread and, by the 1980s, it was rare to find an intelligentsia family that did not have access to one (a 1993-94 survey of seven Russian cities showed that almost a quarter of all households owned one). The distribution of small plots of land to city dwellers so that they could grow potatoes and other vegetables, which had began on a large scale during the Second World War, assisted the expansion, since many cultivators managed to build on their plots. When the Soviet Union, and with it the urban economy, collapsed at the beginning of the 1990s, growing vegetables on dacha plots became part of the standard survival strategy of town dwellers. In 1997, it was estimated that between 60 and 80 per cent of families in St Petersburg had some kind of plot.

Dachas are part of the East European story, too. The Czech version (the *chata*) is the subject of Paulina Bren's essay in *Socialist Spaces*. Like Lovell, Bren sees the dacha as a private space, valued as somewhere one could escape the pressures and demands of urban life. In the context of Soviet-type societies, 'private', as the antonym of 'public',

always raises the possibility of nonconformity with the regime; and this is one of the central concerns of the Crowley and Reid volume, edited by two cultural historians who have played a leading role in the development of studies of the everyday in the former Soviet bloc. Some scholars have argued that in totalitarian states the private is necessarily absorbed in the public; others point to evidence that the private survived, regardless of the state's intentions. Still others note that the state awarded private space to favoured citizens (the dacha settlement at Peredelkino, given by the Politburo to the Soviet Union of Writers in the early 1930s, is an example), while adding that privacy was often 'an illicit haul' won by cunning. Bren's conclusions on the post-1968 *chata* in Czechoslovakia is that it was a form of private space that the regime tolerated (indeed allowed to flourish: by the early 1980s, according to Bren's figures, about two-thirds of Prague households owned or had access to a *chata*), in contrast to hiking, a competing leisure activity which was seen as having more definite oppositional connotations.

Urban apartments were owned – as well as designed, built and allocated – by the state, in both the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. But they could still be cherished, even though they were not strictly personal property. In his essay on Warsaw apartments in the 1950s and 1960s, David Crowley quotes Czeslaw Milosz's remark that 'to protect his position and his apartment (which he has by the grace of the state), the intellectual is prepared to make any sacrifice or compromise; for the value of privacy in a society that affords little if any isolation is greater than the saying "my home is my castle" can lead one to surmise.' The apartment must also, therefore, be seen as a site of privacy – at least as long as it was a separate apartment, not the ill-famed *kommunalka* ('communal apartment') of the Soviet 1930s, 1940s and 1950s.

In the Soviet Union, separate apartments are another instance of a 'gift' of privacy given by a regime that in principle regarded privacy with suspicion: the mass movement out of communal and into separate family apartments was the keystone of Khrushchev's housing reforms of the 1960s. These standardised, mass-produced and hastily constructed separate apartments were later to be stigmatised as *khrushchoby*, a coinage linking Khrushchev with the Russian word for slums, but at the time they were greatly appreciated; in the 1970s and 1980s they were the site of the famous kitchen-table sociability of the Soviet intelligentsia (there was no such thing in communal apartments, whose residents used the kitchen neither for socialising with each other

nor for entertaining friends). In Eastern Europe, where large tracts of Soviet-inspired apartment buildings went up in the postwar decades, the (separate) apartments were also wryly regarded as a Soviet gift and despised for that as well as for their poor design and workmanship. All the same, as Crowley shows, the interior of the apartment – the part the resident could make his own, and to which he could retreat – was regarded in Poland in the 1950s as a private sphere embodying family and domestic values. A popular magazine ran a series of articles on celebrities' apartments that focused on the way they had managed to create 'a congenial and individual atmosphere' despite the 'banal architecture' that unimaginative state planning had forced on them.

The communal apartment is the pièce de résistance in the chronicle of the miseries of Soviet everyday life. Contrary to the myth, they were not a product of collectivist ideology. Rather, they developed out of urban overcrowding and the low budgetary priority that the Stalinist regime gave to housing – these, and a dose of Revolutionary schadenfreude which made local authorities eager to punish the bourgeoisie by forcing them to give up part of their apartments to proletarians. A whole folklore exists about the humiliations, petty vindictiveness, fights and resentments associated with involuntary communal living.

Kitchens and bathrooms were the sites of epic battles over property (saucepans, washbasins) and use of space. Readers of Svetlana Boym's *Common Places* (1994) will recall the nightmarish story of her parents' efforts to entertain foreign visitors in their room in a communal apartment while a stream of urine from a drunken neighbour in the corridor trickled slowly under the door. According to interviews quoted by Katerina Gerasimova in the Crowley and Reid volume, communal lavatories caused so much unhappiness that being able 'to sit down on one's own lavatory' was one of the major pleasures of finally moving to a separate apartment. As for collective spirit, there are a few *kommunalka* memoirs that mention mutual support among neighbours and a feeling that one was part of an extended family. Much more common was the sense that the family's room, not the *kommunalka* as a whole, was home; and as for neighbours, as one of Gerasimova's respondents said, you just tried to pretend they weren't there.

There wasn't much room for possessions in the *kommunalka*, or even in the small separate apartments. This was just as well, as goods of all kinds, even basic necessities like food, shoes and clothing, were in short supply throughout the Soviet period. Yet

shortages did not mean that Soviet citizens were indifferent to consumption. On the contrary, getting hold of scarce goods via connections and various under-the-counter arrangements became a national pastime. Marxist ideology may have emphasised production, but in the Soviet Union it was hierarchies of consumption (based on preferential access to goods) that mattered.[3] From the citizens' standpoint, the key decisions of Soviet-type governments were all about allocation: that is, who got what goods.

While the Soviet regime may be said to have discouraged consumerism by keeping goods scarce, it was not ideologically on the side of asceticism. On the contrary, future socialism was always conceived in terms of plenty: according to the regime's Socialist Realist perception of the world, the meagre supply of goods in the present was only a harbinger of the abundance to come. More goods (especially luxury goods) was conflated with more culture; and in a society where it was hard to get enamel bowls to wash up in, connoisseurs of silverware were held up for emulation and newspapers ran stories on the delivery of grand pianos to Stakhanovite milkmaids. In *Champagne with Caviar*, Jukka Gronow describes the development in the hungry 1930s of a Soviet rhetoric of cultured living that privileged luxury commodities like champagne, caviar and perfume, though only the last of these came near to reaching a mass public. This is not a particularly original book, but the thorough research in the archives it is based on makes *Champagne with Caviar* useful to scholars, and general readers will enjoy its vivid illustrations. In an endearing prefatory note, Gronow remarks that a post-Soviet sighting of the once ubiquitous *torty* (cakes, very sweet, packed in white cardboard boxes) was to her as the madeleine was to the narrator in Proust, bringing back memories of the 1970s and 'my first glasses of Soviet champagne with caviar sandwiches'. ('Sandwich' is a misleading term: what she surely has in mind are *buterbrody* – pieces of bread, buttered only if you were at the Bolshoi Theatre, each topped by a teaspoonful of caviar.)

It was not until the 1960s that serious efforts were made to increase the supply of consumer goods to the whole population. Khrushchev didn't just make rash promises about achieving Communism: he also said that the Soviet Union would catch up with America in the field of consumption. Despite the real gains to the Soviet consumer (the proliferation of dachas, separate apartments and even, under Brezhnev, private cars), the promises were not fulfilled and popular disillusionment followed, together with a

wistful desire for the Western consumer goods that were now known to exist but remained largely out of reach.

In her stimulating book *The Unmaking of Soviet Life*, Caroline Humphrey – one of the few anthropologists with substantial field experience in the old Soviet Union – explores changing attitudes to consumption. Consumer desire, she argues, was both aroused and frustrated in Soviet-type societies and 'acquiring consumption goods and objects became a way of constituting . . . selfhood.' In Eastern Europe, this was an implicitly anti-regime process but in the Soviet Union, as Humphrey points out, the oppositional connotations of consumerism were less clear-cut because, after all, the regime was 'ours', not imposed from outside. In the Soviet Union, as in Eastern Europe, Western goods were coveted, and their arrival en masse with the collapse of the regime at first seemed like a miracle. Who can forget that sudden influx of Mars bars, Snickers, foreign liqueurs (or at least bottles adorned with foreign labels), Nike running shoes, Dutch tomatoes, real and fake Italian leather jackets, and brightly coloured anoraks, sold from ramshackle booths and tables by newly minted entrepreneurs under the watchful eye of Mafia protectors? But consumer fatigue and (justified) doubts about quality soon set in, and Humphrey suggests that by the end of the 1990s the old Soviet assumption that 'foreign' (*importnyi*) meant 'better' – universal in the 1970s and 1980s – had largely gone.

The exception to Humphrey's generalisation are the so-called New Russians, the widely despised nouveaux riches of the post-Soviet period, whose ostentatious embrace of Western goods and Western-style consumption is one of the main reasons people dislike them. Humphrey has a wonderful essay on New Russian villas: those elaborate, architecturally bizarre two and three-storey brick *kottedzhi* whose sudden eruption on the outskirts of Moscow, clearly visible from the air, dramatically transformed the landscape in the 1990s. Built in an eclectic style combining Scandinavian modern and a 'Napoleon III' style described as 'a blend of Classical, Baroque and Renaissance', complete with jacuzzis (often not functioning) and armour-plated doors, and sitting behind high fences on empty plots that often have trash piled in the yards, these villas, in Humphrey's words, 'rear upward in several storeys, with sharply tilted roofs, pointed gables and porches'. In their rawness and 'thrusting verticality', they are symbolic of the New Russians' awkward relationship with their native land.

One of the virtues of Humphrey's book is that the words 'democracy' and 'capitalism' – so enthusiastically invoked by Western commentators in the early years of Russia's 'transition' – are used sparingly. Based largely on field trips in the first half of the 1990s, it shows life being unmade rather than remade, but Humphrey gives little cause to anticipate a happy outcome. Noting the 'cruelty' of the process of economic readjustment, the increasing 'aggressiveness of everyday life' in Russia, and ordinary people's continuing sense of powerlessness and victimisation (though by a new set of oppressors), the most optimistic note she can sound in conclusion is that 'the everyday economies of Russia are a site of ethical choices' – meaning, I think, that people have the option of behaving more or less badly to each other – 'and from this some new, possibly more benign, arrangements are bound to emerge.' It may be reasonable, from the vantage point of 2003, cautiously to raise the level of optimism, and suggest that Russians are already settling into new behaviour patterns and growing used to new institutions and that the very worst times are probably over – the years when the struggle for economic survival coexisted with the catastrophic collapse of the old Soviet value system. But that is not to say that, subjectively speaking, Russians are finally attaining that longed-for 'normal' life. With the perversity of veteran sufferers, many have started to look back nostalgically to the good old Soviet days when there was order and discipline and guaranteed employment; when bosses were paternalistic, and there was plenty of time to socialise at work; when people lived simply, helped each other and were indifferent (*sic*) to possessions; and the corruption of Western pop culture was held at bay. Perhaps Putin will recover some of this Soviet 'normality'. But those thrusting New Russian villas will remain hard for travellers to ignore as their planes land at Sheremetevo – even if the process of going through customs and passport control provokes, like Proust's madeleine, waves of memory of Soviet times past.

[1] Crowley and Reid are also coeditors of *Style and Socialism: Modernity and Material Culture in Postwar Eastern Europe* (Berg, 256 pp., £50 and £14.99, 2000, 1 85973 234 8).

[2] *Refining Russia: Advice Literature, Polite Culture and Gender from Catherine to Yeltsin*(Oxford, 482 pp., £55, 2001, 0 19 815987 0).

[3] See *Our Daily Bread: Socialist Distribution and the Art of Survival in Stalin's Russia 1927-41* by Elena Osokina, translated by Kate Transchel and Greta Bucher (Sharpe, 320 pp., £50, 2001, 1 5632 4904 9).

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Going Native

Sheila Fitzpatrick

- *The Maisky Diaries: Red Ambassador to the Court of St James's 1932-43* edited by Gabriel Gorodetsky, translated by Tatiana Sorokina and Oliver Ready
  Yale, 584 pp, £25.00, September 2015, ISBN 978 0 300 18067 1

There is a striking photograph of Ambassador Maisky, elegantly dressed in a three-piece suit, balding on top as distinguished diplomats often are, standing in front of a life-size portrait of Stalin, who is wearing a simple army jacket. The photo is from the late 1930s, probably taken after Maisky was rebuked by Moscow for not keeping enough Stalin icons in his London embassy. Maisky is looking up, but away from Stalin, with an uneasy smile on his normally friendly face. It was not a warm relationship.

Ivan Maisky was the epitome of the cosmopolitan intellectual whom Stalin and his team both despised and envied, and on top of that, a former Menshevik. A gregarious man, once in London he quickly grasped the mores of the English upper classes and established an extraordinary network of contacts. Indeed, he was on easier personal terms with Churchill and Beaverbrook than with Stalin, who responded unenthusiastically when, in personal meetings during the war, Churchill and Beaverbrook extolled Maisky's performance as ambassador. Praise from capitalist ruling circles was a dubious benefit for a Soviet diplomat, suggesting as it did that the diplomat had gone native. In a way this was true of Maisky, although the diaries confirm that he was a tireless worker for Soviet interests as he saw them, strengthening the Soviet-British alliance and pushing for a Second Front in Western Europe. If Maisky's interpretation of Soviet interests was not always the same as Stalin's and Molotov's, he was still an enormous asset for the Soviet Union as ambassador to Britain, something Stalin must have realised, since he not only failed to recall him on

several occasions when, given Maisky's deviations from Moscow's line, he might have done, but didn't eliminate him along with the majority of Soviet diplomats in the Great Purges of the late 1930s.

Maisky's memoir of his life as a diplomat was first published in Russian in 1964 and quickly translated into English in three volumes: *Who Helped Hitler?*, *Spanish Notebooks* and*Memoirs of a Soviet Ambassador: The War 1939-43*. The diaries that he kept from 1932 to 1943 were found by the Israeli historian Gabriel Gorodetsky in the archives of the Russian Foreign Ministry in 1993. This one-volume edition, with an editorial introduction and commentary, is said to contain about a quarter of the diaries, and is the forerunner of a complete three-volume English edition with full scholarly apparatus which Gorodetsky is currently preparing. (A three-volume Russian edition, independently edited by Russian scholars, was published in 2006-9.)

Gorodetsky is dismissive of the Maisky memoirs, which he calls 'apologetic', 'misleading and tendentious' and 'compromised by the severe censorship they were subjected to' in the Soviet Union. This may be a bit harsh: when I went back to the memoirs after reading the diaries, they struck me as rather less misleading and tendentious than you might expect; the concessions to Soviet orthodoxy (on such matters as the Non-Aggression Pact, the Finnish War and the German attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941) are easy enough to identify. In addition, they remain good to read, since Maisky was not only an interesting character living in interesting times, but also knew how to write.

These same qualities are evident in the diaries, where his personality comes across as even more engaging than in the memoirs (helped by the photographs, many of them unfamiliar ones from Maisky's personal album). It would be a mistake, however, to see the diaries, in contrast to the memoirs, as giving unmediated access to Maisky's inner thoughts. The diaries were typed, or typed up, and Maisky kept at least three copies. They are written, therefore, for the eye of history – and probably, for the eyes of the NKVD, since Maisky's embassy had the usual complement of watchers. Had he been arrested in the 1930s, as he might well have been, his diaries would have been the first thing taken for scrutiny. The censorship in the diaries is different in kind from that of the memoirs, but no less rigorous, and in some respects probably even more so, since the diaries were self-censored within a Stalinist frame of reference, while the memoirs emerged in the milder climate of the Thaw. Gorodetsky compares Maisky's diaries to

Pepys's in their 'astute observation of the British political and social scene, spiced with anecdotes and gossip'. For the anglophile and well-read Maisky, Pepys may even have been a model for the amusing description of the little princesses giggling at a reception given by their father, George VI, or the anecdotes about George Bernard Shaw's marriage. The vignettes of the men of power he knew are artful in a different way.

Maisky was born Jan Mikhailovich Lyakhovetsky in 1884 in a small Russian town near Nizhny Novgorod, and grew up in the Siberian city of Omsk, where his Russified Polish father was serving as a military doctor. In his likeable memoir of childhood, *Before the Storm*(published in London in 1943), Maisky gives a vivid description of a close, earnest, socially-conscious family, atheist but within an Orthodox cultural tradition, an epitome of the progressive intelligentsia that read Shakespeare and Schiller as well as Herzen and Chernyshevsky and, as teachers, doctors and sometimes revolutionaries, dedicated their lives to 'the people'. Gorodetsky says that Maisky's father was 'of Jewish-Polish descent, a fact which Maisky preferred to conceal', but perhaps for young Lyakhovetsky, growing up in a totally non-religious household in a non-Jewish community, it wasn't a 'fact' in any meaningful sense. Certainly it doesn't seem to have impeded his access first to gymnasium in Omsk and then to St Petersburg University, despite the existence of Jewish quotas.

Although Maisky never identified as a Jew, that was how he was generally seen in English upper-class circles. Even Beatrice Webb, Maisky's close friend, wondered at one point how Ribbentrop and the Nazis 'felt towards the stocky, ugly Jew-tartar Soviet emissary, who compares more to a shrewd businessman negotiating in a world market than to a professional diplomatist'. Gorodetsky treats the Jewish label as natural, but I find it a bit odd. Was Maisky being equated with the overtly Jewish Maxim Litvinov, his old friend and patron, who was Soviet foreign minister throughout the 1930s? Or did the British simply assume, like the Nazis, that all Soviet leaders not from the Caucasus were Jewish?

Maisky's remarkable network of British friends and acquaintances ran the gamut of statesmen (Churchill, Eden, Lloyd George, Ramsay MacDonald), Foreign Office types (Vansittart), newspaper magnates (Beaverbrook), politicians on both sides of the House, writers and intellectuals (Shaw, H.G. Wells, Sidney and Beatrice Webb), trade-unionists, bankers and that uncategorisable original, Lady Astor. 'An ambassador without excellent personal contacts is not worthy of the name,' Maisky wrote to Fedor

Gusev, one of the ‘new men’ who came into the Soviet diplomatic service after the Great Purges. It was important not only to know people but to know them well enough to meet and chat informally and call them up on the phone. This had been Maisky’s conscious strategy from his appointment to Britain in 1932, when he wrote to Litvinov that his aim was ‘extending as widely as possible the series of visits which diplomatic etiquette imposes on a newly appointed ambassador, and in doing so to include not only the narrow circle of persons connected with the Foreign Office but also a number of members of the government, prominent politicians, people of the City and representatives of the cultural world’.

Maisky came in with unusual advantages in terms of acquaintances. Having been expelled from St Petersburg University for revolutionary activity in the 1900s, he was allowed to go into European exile, first in Germany, where he acquired a masters degree in economics at the University of Munich, and then from 1912 to 1917 in London. There he became friendly with Litvinov and his English wife, Ivy, and through Ivy met members of the Fabians, including Shaw and Wells, with whom he maintained friendly contacts up to the Second World War. Fabian socialism – non-Marxist and non-revolutionary, stressing intellectual input and gradualism – was always congenial to Maisky, even after he joined the Bolsheviks in the early 1920s.

It isn’t clear when he first encountered the Webbs, whose work on trade unionism had impressed him in his Russian student days. Beatrice’s 1932-33 diary entries assessed him favourably as a newly met ambassador: ‘not a fanatical Marxist’ but someone who takes ‘a broad view’ and sees ‘the fanatical metaphysics and repression of today’ as ‘temporary, brought about by past horrors and the low level of culture out of which the revolution started’. Maisky and his wife, Agniya, regularly went to the Webbs’ place at Passfield Corner for the weekend, and met them in London as well. We have no information on Stalin’s reaction to Maisky’s friendship with them, but he should have been grateful: one of Beatrice’s diary entries reports an afternoon in 1935 spent working with Maisky on the proofs of their very popular fellow-travelling book *Soviet Communism: A New Civilisation?*, Maisky ‘giving us corrections and additions to our statements or criticising our conclusions’. Beatrice was not inclined to personal intimacy, but her diary makes clear that she was fond of both the Maiskys. Her death in April 1943, a month or so before his recall, was ‘a bitter loss’ to Maisky. Because of

their ‘extremely close friendship’, he and Agniya were among the few outsiders invited to the family funeral.

Maisky was introduced to Churchill in the mid-1930s by Vansittart, permanent under-secretary for foreign affairs and a strong supporter of the British-Soviet alliance, although no sympathiser with communism. The detailed and lively reports in Maisky’s diaries of his many meetings with Churchill are particularly valuable, Gorodetsky points out, because they weren’t minuted in British archives. Churchill was frank with Maisky, telling him in March 1938 of his conviction that Hitler’s Germany, not the Soviet Union, represented ‘the greatest menace to the British Empire’, but adding that ‘if, one fine day, the German fascist threat to the Empire disappears and the communist menace raises its head again, then … I would raise the banner of struggle against you once more.’ Maisky wasn’t exaggerating when, on his departure, he wrote to Churchill that ‘from a personal and political point of view my associations with you … have been the highlight of my Ambassadorship here.’ But Churchill wasn’t the only statesman with whom Maisky was on easy terms. The ‘old wizard’ Lloyd George was another with whom he established a family friendship, writing affectionately of him as ‘a sort of clot of high-voltage intellectual energy … an astonishing person’.

Maisky reported back to Moscow in detail on his conversations with these highly placed interlocutors. Like all ambassadors, he listened carefully for hints of policy shifts, and dropped equivalent hints on Soviet intentions at the behest of his masters. But he did much more than that. One of the most interesting aspects of the diaries is that they show the remarkable extent to which Maisky was prepared to take his own initiatives, which he hoped his masters would follow up, but for which he had no authorisation from the Soviet Foreign Ministry or the Kremlin. In the late 1930s, with his nominal boss Litvinov ‘increasingly hamstrung by the vacillating and sceptical attitude of the Kremlin’ and ‘crippled by the purges in his ministry’, Maisky was the ‘sole driving force’ pushing collective security on the Soviet side, Gorodetsky argues, and the man who, when ‘paralysis struck the Kremlin’ after the German attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941, was the prime mover in forging the British-US-Soviet alliance. He pushed at the British political establishment as well as at the Kremlin; and Gorodetsky marvels, with reason, at his ‘unabashed interference in British domestic politics’ when in the late 1930s he sought to encourage the ousting of the appeaser Chamberlain and replacing him with Churchill or Eden.

When it comes to his own diplomatic initiatives, the diaries are relatively discreet – not surprisingly, as this could have got Maisky into real trouble at home – while the 1960s memoirs make bolder claims. Of his quick decision after the German attack on the Soviet Union to do everything in his power to push the Allies to open a Second Front in Europe, Maisky wrote in his memoirs: 'I did not think I had the right to sit with hands folded only because I had received no "tasks" from Moscow. Certainly not! … My conscience could not put up with this, and I decided to act independently, arising out of my own understanding of the situation and the most pressing needs of the Soviet Union.' In contrast, his diary entries for 20 July and 10 August 1941 were careful to attribute any initiative on the Second Front question to Stalin.

One of Maisky's standard modi operandi in trying to convince Moscow of something was to attribute his own ideas to interlocutors such as Eden. Gorodetsky, with his extensive reading of other archival sources, does a useful editorial service in alerting us to occasions when Maisky does this. On the other hand, he doesn't point out that it was a game two could play: Eden and the rest were surely up to the same tricks. Sometimes it was even a joint effort, as in a discussion in February 1943 reported to their respective masters that Gorodetsky convincingly reads as a case of Eden and Maisky 'plotting behind their leaders' backs'.

Maisky narrowly escaped big trouble in 1939 when a British draft White Book on the negotiations between Britain, France and the Soviet Union threatened to reveal discrepancies between his account of the meeting and that of Lord Halifax, the foreign secretary, as well as evidence of his deviation from the line laid down by the newly appointed Molotov. Luckily, publication was dropped, but Maisky would get into trouble later for having illicitly obtained a microfilm of the text and concealed it from his superiors. No wonder, given that it included the British conclusion that Maisky and Molotov were trying to confuse them by appearing to disagree, which would have been news to Molotov.

A diplomat, so they say, is an honest man sent abroad to lie for his country; Maisky had to do his share of that. The Great Purges of 1937-38 took a high toll among cosmopolitan diplomats like him; Agniya's brother-in-law was sent to the Gulag. Maisky, recalled to Moscow in 1938 along with other ambassadors, had to make a written confession of political shortsightedness in failing to recognise 'enemies of the people' inside his embassy, before being brought in with Litvinov for a dressing down

from Stalin, Molotov and Voroshilov, and sent back with a warning. ‘Poor Maiskys, what a life they must be leading!’ Beatrice Webb wrote (she wasn’t as innocent about what went on in the Soviet Union as is sometimes assumed) in March 1938. But even with her they had to keep up appearances: in December 1937 she recorded that he was more or less his usual self on a visit to Passfield Corner, though ‘reserved about the arrests and rumours of arrests; justifies some, denies the fact of others.’

The Nazi-Soviet Pact of September 1939 produced another ‘Poor Maiskys!’ entry, this time with the comment ‘we shall never see them again: if we did we should not know what to say to them, nor they to us. With their friend Litvinov they will disappear, let us hope safely, somewhere in the background of that enormous and enigmatic territory.’ She was wrong, but it was a reasonable guess: Maisky had put himself on the line by favouring a Soviet-British alliance, not a German one; he had been kept totally out of the loop on Soviet-German negotiations, and was lucky to escape punishment. His diaries are typically cautious on the subject of his reaction to the pact; ‘involuntarily, I threw up my hands,’ is as far as he goes in an entry of 22 August, adding two days later: ‘Our policy is obviously undergoing a sharp change of direction, the meaning and consequences of which are not yet entirely clear to me. I must wait for further information from Moscow.’ The diaries, all the more likely to be read by prying eyes in the new diplomatic regime instituted after Litvinov’s replacement by Molotov in 1939, provide little information about the Maiskys’ real reaction, of which we have only hints in other sources. In a confidential report, Eden reported Agniya’s rash admission over lunch of her ‘disappointment’ with the pact, while Maisky was later embarrassed by the publication of a report from another British diplomat of his comment that ‘we lived in a period of change … In the jungle the strangest of animals got together – if they felt their joint interests made this advisable.’

According to Gorodetsky, Maisky ‘successfully deluded historians’ in his memoirs by claiming that in the early summer of 1941 he consistently passed on information about an imminent German attack, emphasising its reliability and importance. His communications with Stalin and Molotov on the subject were actually more ambiguous, and the diaries make clear that Maisky was not sure whether to believe the information or not. Even four days before the attack, on 18 June, when Stafford Cripps tried to persuade him that, on the basis of British intelligence, a German attack was imminent, he maintained a position of scepticism, while wondering afterwards: ‘Is

Cripps right? Will Hitler really attack us?' He 'did not want to believe it', as he recorded three days later, on the eve of the attack. Stalin no doubt had the same response to the information. An interesting sidelight from the diaries is the discovery that had Maisky not had a security watchdog put on his tail, whose presence at all his meetings with British officials was obligatory, the Soviet Union might have received better intelligence. Eden, trying to convey the same information as Cripps and accustomed to a confidential relationship with Maisky, was furious when Maisky, under orders, insisted that his watchdog sit in on their meeting. Eden remained 'red-faced and sulky during the whole conversation', Maisky recorded in his diary, and he himself seems to have been too distracted to pay attention to the information he was being given.

Maisky's diaries remind us of how remarkably popular the Soviet Union became in Britain during the war. Even during the Phoney War of 1940, Maisky reported receiving an ecstatic reception at an air-raid shelter in the East End, commenting that 'this is how the East End greets the Soviet ambassador today. If the war lasts two more years, Piccadilly will greet him in a similar way.' Indeed, by October 1941, with the Soviet Union and Britain unequivocally on the same side, he noted that 'everything "Russian" is in vogue,' and reported that he had been given an ovation at the City Livery Club, 'the City's holy of holies', as well as being elected as an honorary member of the Athenaeum. But he was careful to make Stalin, not himself, the centre of attention, writing in his diary: 'I shall just mention Stalin's popularity. His appearance on the screen always elicits loud cheers, much louder cheers than those given to Churchill or the king.'

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Maisky's recall from London in 1943, after all his diplomatic success, was hard to take. Ever the optimist, he was reluctant to admit that it signified his removal from a central role in Soviet diplomacy, but the signs of waning status multiplied in the years after his return. Initially assigned an unimportant position in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he successfully petitioned Stalin for a move to the Academy of Sciences and wrote his diplomatic memoirs at the Institute of History. He was elected as an academician in 1946, but after that it was all downhill. With the 'anti-cosmopolitan' campaign in full swing in the late 1940s, Maisky, as a person of known sympathy with the wartime Allies who was also a Jew, was in double jeopardy. In 1949, a colleague at the Institute of History came under criticism for writing a scholarly book on wartime international

relations that was, allegedly under Maisky's influence, too favourable to the Allies. The colleague denounced him in his own apologia.

On 19 February 1953, two weeks before Stalin's death, Maisky and others who had worked with him in the London Embassy were arrested. 'Anti-cosmopolitanism' had by this time come to be more or less equivalent to anti-Semitism, and Maisky seems to have been arrested as a 'Jewish nationalist' (like the Jewish wife of Maisky's nemesis and former boss, Molotov, a few years earlier), though he was subsequently unwilling to admit that being Jewish had anything to do it. Stalin's timely death should have got him off the hook, as it had Molotov's wife and other prominent Jews, but an unexpected complication intervened in the form of Lavrentiy Beria.

In the collective leadership that took over after Stalin's death, Beria, head of the security police, was the most overtly ambitious, which ultimately led his colleagues to remove and a few months later execute him. But in the crucial months between Stalin's death in March 1953 and Beria's fall in July, Beria, disapproving of Molotov's foreign policy as too 'Stalinist', is said to have proposed that Maisky replace him as foreign minister. This not only incensed Molotov but also tarred Maisky with the 'Beria' brush after the latter's disgrace. As a result, instead of being released, Maisky was kept in prison and, in May 1955, tried before a military tribunal for acting in the service of British imperialist interests. The damaging 1939 report in the unpublished White Book and his concealment of it was brought up against him. He defended himself vigorously, and was convicted only on the lesser charge of having abused his power and privileges as ambassador.

His full rehabilitation had to wait until 1960. The Thaw allowed him to publish his memoirs, albeit under some censorship. This was both a major literary-historical achievement and an effective apologia, though it is said that Maisky never fully reconciled himself to his exclusion from the circles of Soviet foreign policy-makers. Scandal came close again in 1965 when Maisky's sometime student, friend and colleague at the Institute of History, Aleksandr Nekrich, got into trouble for his book *22 June, 1941*, which raised the issue of Stalin's culpability in ignoring intelligence about the imminent German attack. Maisky supported Nekrich, but the book was withdrawn and its author left under a pall. Maisky's last years were spent out of the public eye; he died in his 91st year in 1975.

Whose person is he?

Sheila Fitzpatrick

- *Practising Stalinism: Bolsheviks, Boyars and the Persistence of Tradition* by J. Arch Getty
  Yale, 359 pp, £30.00, September 2013, ISBN 978 0 300 16929 4

  Arch Getty spent a great many hours in Soviet libraries and archives (presumably during the 1980s), trying to understand Stalinism, studying its institutions and formal procedures, reading resolutions and exegeses that explained, in the characteristic self-satisfied tone of Soviet bureaucratic documentation, that the wise decisions of the Party's Central Committee and Council of Ministers had been duly disseminated, hailed by the public, and implemented. At the same time, he was making friends in Russia, learning from them about the informal side of Soviet life, 'understanding for the first time what it meant to be part of a group, a "clan", an "us"'. As he got to know how his friends organised their lives, using personal contacts to get things done, enmeshed in a network of reciprocal favours, contemptuous of state bureaucracy and skilled at evading its demands, he started to wonder whether the Soviet party-state, so dominant in the documents, was nothing more than a mirage, and 'official institutions … just collections of people whose public façade was better than most at convincing people to obey them'. Observing his friends, he concluded that 'few people trusted or even believed in institutions; they believed in people. Everything was personal … I began to wonder if those archival folders were, in a sense, tricking me. Was the modern state, as in Pierre Bourdieu's suspicion, creating itself through my reading of it?' Perhaps that state, with all its modern bureaucratic rationality, existed only on paper, masking a reality rooted in personal relationships and informal practices.

  Bourdieu's sudden appearance raises an obvious question: is it modern states in general that have this deceptive, phantasmal character (as Bourdieu suggested) or the Soviet state in particular (as Getty implies)? Like everyone who worked in the old Soviet Union, Getty was struck by the dissonance between the array of formal rules and structures, on the one hand, and the disorderly, self-organised practices of everyday Russia, on the other. Where did these practices, so alien to Marxist-Leninist and Bolshevik scientific rationality, come from? His answer is 'tradition': that is, something quintessentially Russian that had nothing to do with Bolshevism – and specifically, traditional practices characteristic of the 17th-century Muscovite state of tsars and their not always dutiful noble servitors, the boyars. In Muscovy, politics was 'personal

and patrimonial rather than institutional or legal'. Power was personified, both at the centre in the person of the tsar, where it had a charismatic dimension, and in the boyar 'clans', with what were originally their independent regional power bases, which the early modern tsars were trying to turn into a reliable service class. An elaborate 'place' system (*mestnichestvo*) determined a boyar's exact rank for honorific and ceremonial purposes. Patron-client relationships were crucial in politics and every other aspect of life. Collective responsibility – on the part of a clan, family or peasant community – for the criminal actions of their individual members was an organising principle. Writing a petition to the tsar was a conventional recourse for anyone with a grievance or a cause to advance; similarly, writing denunciations of wrongdoing to the tsar was considered a subject's duty.

A prime example of archaic throwback is the Bolsheviks' remarkable decision to preserve Lenin's body after his death in 1924 and put it on public display – remarkable because treating Lenin as if he were an Orthodox saint clashed so sharply with the Bolsheviks' scientific rationalism. The decision is often, but wrongly, attributed to Stalin, presumably because of his seminary education, on the one hand, and the later flourishing of a Stalin cult, on the other. In fact, he took no part in the rather anguished discussion among the leaders about what to do with Lenin's body, and his close associate Klim Voroshilov, who did, took a hard line against preservation and display: 'We must not resort to canonisation … We would stop being Marxist-Leninists.' There were others in the leadership who felt differently, presumably illustrating Getty's point about the 'deep structures' of tradition bubbling up from the collective unconscious. In Getty's account, it was something the leaders backed into, influenced by the huge crowds that gathered to view the body in the Kremlin's Hall of Columns and kept coming after the customary three days' viewing, as well as by Professors Zbarsky and Vorobev's eagerness to try out their new chemical procedures for long-term preservation. At first the mausoleum on Red Square to which Lenin's body was moved was temporary and the decision to keep him on view provisional; the decision to build a permanent mausoleum came only after five years or so. In opting for 'canonisation', the Bolsheviks were just doing what came naturally without too much self-examination, Getty argues, but, as he himself shows, there was a lot of unease in the leadership. Still, conscious of its minority status and uncertain standing with the mass of the population, it could scarcely help noticing that in terms of popular legitimacy it

had been unexpectedly dealt a trump card. Perhaps to counterbalance the archaic overtones of the whole venture, the permanent mausoleum was built by the modernist architect A.V. Shchusev in constructivist style. Among other things, this entailed the flat roof which for decades afterwards served as the Politburo's reviewing stand for May Day and Revolution Day parades in Red Square. On such occasions, Getty writes, 'the Politburo stood on Lenin's tomb – literally on his body.'

The idea that traditional (Muscovite) practices resurfaced in the Soviet period has a long genealogy in Russian studies. In his 1986 article, 'Moscow Folkways', which Getty frequently cites, the Muscovite historian Edward Keenan drew attention to the persistence of 'deep structures' of Muscovite origin in Soviet political behaviour, irrespective of changing ideology and institutions. Stalin's biographer Robert Tucker was keen on the resemblance between Stalin and the most bloodthirsty of the 16th-century tsars, Ivan the Terrible, noting in *Stalin in Power* that Stalin, too, saw a resemblance, as witness his emotional response to Eisenstein's*Ivan the Terrible* with its vivid portrayal of the life-and-death struggle between Ivan and his boyars. The 'struggle with the boyars' motif is important in Getty's argument, though in a different way from Tucker's. He portrays the 'Old Bolsheviks', by which he seems to mean the prewar party elite (roughly corresponding with the 4000-odd central and regional office-holders whose appointment was a prerogative of the Central Committee) as an equivalent to the Muscovite boyar class. Old Bolsheviks 'knew and socialised with each other. They lived together in fortified places, the Kremlin being only one of their guarded castles. They had their own revolutionary veterans' societies and publications. Their sons and daughters attended the same schools, and married the daughters and sons of other Old Bolsheviks with whom they grew up.' Touchy about personal honour – Getty has some nice examples of this – they

were prima donnas, quick to take offence and quick to defend their honour in ways that appear anachronistic among people who considered themselves the most modern and democratic. They postured, posed, and wrote florid letters about why their accomplishments and opinions were important, why they should not be subordinated to various persons or committees, or how they had been subjected to insupportable slights and unbearable insults from other comrades. This was party culture; everything was personal.

When told to take up new appointments, they declined so indignantly that Getty wonders whether they had a conventional ‘right of refusal’. (So much for party discipline.) Of course, the Old Bolsheviks ‘did not choose to become heirs to Russian nobility and would hotly deny that they had done so’. With many of them no more than ‘one generation away from the Russian village, with its traditional practices’, it was the ‘deep structures’ that sucked them in.

I’m sympathetic to this argument and to the dismissive attitude to formal ideology it implies, but Getty overdoes it. The Bolsheviks (under which rubric I include the Stalinists) were deeply committed to what they saw as progress and modern science, which included a modern (Marxist-Leninist) approach to government; they were also actively hostile to many forms of tradition, from Orthodox religion to the ‘bourgeois’ family. It wasn’t Muscovite traditions embedded in their unconscious that made them hell-bent on industrialising, on collectivising agriculture, on combating the church and religious ‘superstition’, educating the population and promoting science and technology. Nor can these be dismissed as ideological commitments that had no relevance to real-life policy. It was in support of the first three that the Stalinist regime embarked at the end of the 1920s on the path of state violence and repression. ‘The sources clearly show that the day-to-day practical decisions they took … were dictated by the need to help friends, destroy enemies, industrialise the country, and simply stay in power,’ Getty states. Yes, indeed, but destroying the class enemy, advancing the proletariat and industrialising were key Marxist-Leninist objectives, not ad hoc policies that had to be ‘ideologically justified after the fact’.

Another problem with the ‘Muscovite tradition’ argument is that it requires a leap back from the 20th century to the 17th, as if the modernising 18th and 19th centuries had never happened. It’s possible to imagine ways of explaining a leap of that sort, but Getty just brushes off the difficulty. One possible explanation would be that reversion to traditional practices is characteristic of periods of governmental and institutional collapse, as in the first Soviet (and the first post-Soviet) decades. Another might be that in denouncing and repudiating Western capitalism and bourgeois liberalism and legality, the Bolsheviks were hoist with their own petard. If you think of the law as a cover for the interests of the dominant classes, you undermine its effectiveness as a way of resolving disputes, with the result that people write petitions and denunciations as well as going to court. If you despise parliamentary democracy and set up something

called a dictatorship (even if it's the dictatorship of a class), it may not be surprising that personal dictatorship and a leader cult are what you get.

The Bolsheviks' contempt for due process extended to bureaucracy, a word that in their lexicon was always pejorative. This was a disadvantage when it came to governing the country, especially as it emerged that some 'deep structures' (but not necessarily Muscovite ones) led them to feel that the way to circumvent bureaucratic inertia was by periodic bouts of violence from the top. It's often been thought that Stalin was the only leading Bolshevik of the 1920s who knew how to turn the new party bureaucracy to his advantage, using his control of the Central Committee Secretariat and Orgburo to appoint 'his' men to high provincial positions, guaranteeing their election as delegates to the periodic party congresses which in turn elected the Central Committee and confirmed Stalin's faction in power (Robert Daniels called it a 'circular flow of power'). Getty will have none of this. The Secretariat may have aspired to control provincial appointments, but their success was limited, at least in the early years, as Stalin's appointments man, Lazar Kaganovich, reported in the mid-1920s. Getty concludes on the basis of the Secretariat's and Orgburo's archives that 'there are few reasons to imagine that these [provincial] leaders thought that they owed their jobs to Stalin, and quite a few reasons to think that resisting "opposition" in principle was more important to them than supporting any particular politician, including Stalin.' Stalin, for his part, talked about the provincial leaders as if they were his problem rather than his people. As he told colleagues in 1931, 'I have the impression that there are no real party organisations in the Transcaucasus … No, it's a system of chieftains, not a party organisation. Whose person is he? Who will he support? Who will he drink with? Who will he visit as a guest?' It had been the same in the Ukraine, Stalin said, but 'we … broke up the chieftain system' there.

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In Getty's picture, Stalin – as well, presumably, as his opponents in the leadership struggle of the 1920s: Trotsky, Zinoviev, Bukharin et al – was himself chieftain of a clan, though he didn't admit it. Oddly enough, it's a rather small clan, more like a team in fact, more or less co-terminous with the Politburo of the late 1920s and 1930s: Molotov, Kaganovich, Voroshilov, Kirov and Ordzhonikidze in the first rank, Mikoyan and Kalinin in the second, and later entrants including Zhdanov, Beria and Khrushchev. Kaganovich did a stint in the Ukraine in the 1920s, presumably 'breaking

up the chieftain system' there, while Kirov was sent to Leningrad to Stalinise the local party after Zinoviev's defeat, but for the most part the Stalin 'clan' was Moscow-based. You would expect Stalin and his team members (not to mention their opponents in the factional struggle after Lenin's death) to have done their best to cultivate patron-client relationships in the provinces, but if they did, that's not part of Getty's story. He writes about the regional 'clans' as if they really were boyars with local roots and ethnicity, but if that was more or less true of the Caucasus, and partly true of the Ukraine, it certainly wasn't the normal model elsewhere.

If this part of Getty's argument is muddy, his take on 'police clans', drawing on recent Russian scholarship, is interesting, convincing, and hard to square with the conventional picture of Stalin as the master of the security police. None of the Cheka/GPU leaders of the 1920s was specifically a Stalin man, although the factionally non-aligned Dzerzhinsky (who died in 1926) was probably more sympathetic to the Stalin faction than to its opponents. Yagoda, effectively Dzerzhinsky's successor, had his own 'police clan' which, despite its privileged position in the centre, had a competitor in the 'North Caucasus' clan headed by E.G. Evdokimov, 'specialists in fighting bandits in the countryside, partial to "mass operations" against recalcitrant ethnic and social groups'. 'Before 1936,' Getty argues, 'Stalin rarely tried to control the police clans. The political police was considered a specialised professional service with not only its own traditions but its particular and secret methods' and 'technical skill'. Until the middle of the 1930s Stalin's 'interventions took place only when a balance had to be struck between warring clans, or when police clan conflicts threatened to tear the institution apart.' In the mid-1930s Stalin finally got rid of Yagoda and his clan, replacing him with his own man, Nikolai Yezhov, who became the executor of Stalin's Great Purges, for which, having no previous connections with the police, he had to rely on the North Caucasians, with their experience in and penchant for mass operations.

There's a hint here that the form, at least, of the Great Purges owed something to the police clan that carried them out rather than to Stalin. But Getty's main argument about the origins of the Purges hinges on Stalin's relations with party 'boyars' in the provinces. In Getty's view, there was a systemic tendency for the boyars to seek to maximise their power vis-à-vis the centre, and for the centre to resist, sometimes violently and lethally. During collectivisation, at the beginning of the 1930s, Stalin had been 'forced to cede considerable power to these provincial barons', notably the power

to sign off on executions and regional mass operations. While this power was retracted in 1933, the tug of war between centre and periphery continued, and Stalin was intent on reining the provincial leaders in, although, unwilling to provoke a direct confrontation, he moved 'slowly and delicately'. Getty emphasises how seriously Stalin took this threat, which, even granting his suspicious nature, isn't entirely persuasive given the absence of any evidence that the clans' ambitions went beyond local power. (Nobody, Getty included, has argued that in the pre-Purge period regional party clans showed any signs of linking up with remnants of the central Oppositionist clans of the 1920s, which would have been a real threat.)

How matters came to a lethal climax in the Great Purges of 1937-38 is told in two versions. One, proposed by James Harris some years ago in his book *The Great Urals*, focuses on central pressure on the regions to meet high production targets, leading the regions to take defensive action, enforcing a united front (which included the local police chief) under the regional first secretaries, and, where necessary, systematically misleading the centre on the economic indices. In a climate of alarm about hidden 'enemies of the people' this was interpreted by the centre as conspiracy, which indeed it was, though the aim was self-protection, not regime overthrow.

Getty, however argues that it was the new state constitution, drafted in 1936 with Stalin's keen participation, that turned out to be the trigger. The constitution guaranteed 'equal, direct and secret elections' in Soviet (i.e. state) institutions, and early indications were that this would mean multi-candidate contests with a more or less unrestricted right to nominate at the local level, a far cry from the tightly controlled and mainly ceremonial electoral practice in place from the late 1920s. Western scholars have usually seen these democratic provisions as a façade, but Getty has long believed that Stalin seriously intended to implement them, regardless of the security dangers involved, and in his argument, these dangers were immediately obvious and alarming to the regional boyars, if not at first to Stalin. Without openly criticising the new electoral procedures due to be implemented in 1937, they dragged their feet, remaining silent at official occasions when they would have been expected to applaud. The predicted problem of popular unrest eventuated, with 'class enemies' coming out from the undergrowth and trying to nominate their own local candidates for the 1937 Soviet elections. Stalin's suspicions of concealed conspiratorial opposition to his leadership were nevertheless exacerbated. In the short run, it might have seemed

to work out to the advantage of the provincial leaders, since Stalin was forced by the increasingly alarming signs of unrest to agree to their urgent requests to be allowed to sign off on executions and local mass operations, as they had done before 1933. They were the ones pushing for higher execution and arrest targets, Getty argues, with Stalin trying to keep the numbers down. But their triumph was short-lived, as, parallel with the mass operations of 1937, the centre launched a lethal campaign against highly placed 'enemies of the people' that quickly and efficiently destroyed the majority of provincial party leaders and their clan supporters.

Getty concludes that the real origins of the Great Purges – in particular, the mass operations – lay not, as many historians have argued, in fear of war and the perceived necessity of destroying a potential fifth column, but in the dynamics of a centre-periphery power conflict that both triggered the terror of 1937 and (thanks to local officials' tendency to exceed repression targets) caused it to snowball. It's a provocative and useful argument, and Getty has a point about the total lack of evidence in contemporary sources for the now widely accepted notion that the origins of the Great Purges lay in the fear of war. Yet if it's true that a centre-periphery conflict featuring over-powerful and bloodthirsty regional leaders brought on the Terror, why didn't any of Stalin's Politburo associates who outlived him – Molotov, Kaganovich, Mikoyan – come out and say so later, even when under Khrushchev they personally were under attack for complicity in Stalin's crimes? None of the old regional 'boyars' were around any longer to defend themselves, and it might have deflected some of the criticism away from the Politburo survivors. But there's not a whisper of that in the numerous memoirs and interviews they produced in the post-Stalin decades: in so far as Stalin team members opted for any explanation other than Stalin's bloodymindedness, it was the good old 'threat of war', embraced with particular fervour by Molotov in old age (which doesn't mean we have to believe him).

Stalin in my view was a nastier and more wily character than Getty suspects, and at least part of his 'democratic' ploy with the constitution and the elections was to flush out hidden or potential enemies in his administration as well as in the population so that he could get rid of them. I think he saw this as the kind of bold revolutionary stroke, on the lines of forced collectivisation but bolder, that only a great revolutionary leader would have risked; and that Molotov and the rest of his team went along with his way of seeing things, though with a certain inward quaking. No doubt Stalin

wanted the regional leaders under tighter control, but as the events of 1937 show, that could have been achieved by dismissing them, with the optional extras of arrest and execution. The regional leaders' feet had already been put to the fire at the February-March 1937 Central Committee plenum, which seems to undercut Getty's argument that the mass operations decision, taken only in July of that year, was what set off the Purges.

Destroying clan leaders on a one-time basis didn't destroy the Soviet Union's 'clan culture and system' or the persistence of other deep structures based on Russian tradition. An entertaining conclusion to Getty's book brings us up to the present, with a discussion of the Putin cult, the emergence of new central and provincial clans, including the siloviki (from the old Soviet security services), and the overwhelming importance of personal connections in post-Soviet Russia. If there is an implicit Stalin comparison, Putin comes out of it well, since he was quicker to take decisive action against regional boyars, and managed their transformation in 2004 from elective officials to appointed ones without bloodshed or major political crisis. Clearly Getty is not one of those who got their hopes up about Russia's post-Soviet transition to Western-style democracy ('He might as well have been speaking Swahili,' he says of Gorbachev's attempt at democratic institutional reform). Perhaps Russia can change, he concludes, though it most probably won't. But why won't it? Personal connections are important in a lot of places and circumstances (Margaret Thatcher's cabinet is one example Getty cites), and, as Bourdieu observed, when it comes to the modern state and its pretensions to rationality, 'one can never doubt too much'. Granted; but then what is so special about Russia and its persistent informal practices?

Who gets the dacha?

Sheila Fitzpatrick

- *Stalin's General: The Life of Georgy Zhukov* by Geoffrey Roberts
  Icon, 375 pp, £25.00, August 2012, ISBN 978 1 84831 442 9

Of the Soviet Union's World War Two military leaders, Marshal Zhukov was the most celebrated, both at home and in the West. Broad-faced, stocky, plain-spoken with a touch of swagger, Georgy Konstantinovich epitomised Russian solidity and resolve. The commander with the golden touch, Stalin's favourite, he seemed to be everywhere

during the war: stopping the Germans entering Leningrad in the autumn of 1941; commanding the defence of Moscow; co-ordinating Soviet forces in the battle of Stalingrad; heading the westward drive on the Belorussian Front in 1944; taking Berlin and accepting the German surrender in May 1945. Zhukov was the man on the white horse who led the victory parade in Red Square.

Such a popular and charismatic figure was not going to get by without having problems. Both in Stalin's time and in Khrushchev's, there were periods of demotion and disgrace, but Zhukov sat them out, and always bobbed up again. His career under Khrushchev in the 1950s was almost equally spectacular: he took part in the arrest of Beria in June 1953; actively supported both de-Stalinisation and the Hungarian invasion as defence minister in 1956; and in 1957 rescued Khrushchev from the challenge of the Anti-Party Group. At the Geneva summit in 1955, he made the cover of *Time*, pictured with an air of stern determination in front of a heavily fortified Kremlin, as if he were the Soviet leader. Even in his periods of disgrace, the Russian people loved him and saw him as one of them, or so we are told. His reputation rose even further posthumously with the collapse of the Soviet Union. A statue was erected next to the Kremlin in Yeltsin's time. State prizes and medals were created in his name, the citations noting that he had 'accepted the surrender of Nazi Germany' in May 1945, a literally accurate if somewhat misleading statement presumably intended to downplay Stalin's significance to the war effort. The Yeltsin-era celebration indeed was so extensive that Putin must have had difficulty topping it. He did his best, however, laying flowers on a monument to Zhukov in Ulan Bator in May 2009. Comparisons with the great commanders of the Napoleonic Wars, Mikhail Kutuzov and Aleksandr Suvorov, were commonplace. And it wasn't only Putin and Medvedev who sought to cover themselves with Zhukov's mantle: last spring, anti-Putin demonstrators organised an overnight vigil at his statue by the Kremlin.

Zhukov's was a typical Soviet success story, of upward mobility via Bolshevik Party membership and Red Army service in the Civil War. Born in 1896 in the village of Strelkovka, eighty miles from Moscow in the central industrial region, the son of a cobbler and a poor peasant, he was sent to Moscow to work for his uncle as an apprentice furrier after three years in a parish primary school. His lifelong drive to educate himself started in Moscow, where it included learning German from his cousin, the boss's son, who had been sent to Germany to learn the language for the family business – this branch of the family clearly wasn't so lowly. By the start of World War One the young Georgy had finished his apprenticeship and was earning good money as a furrier. 'A photograph of him and his fellow furriers dating from this time shows affluent, smartly dressed young urbanites seemingly confident of their future,' Geoffrey Roberts tells us, speculating that, but for the war and then the Revolution, Zhukov would have ended up as a solid member of the bourgeoisie, a furrier with his own business. The war set him on a different path. Conscripted in the summer of 1915 and assigned to a cavalry regiment, he was soon the recipient of two St George Crosses for valour and was sent off for training as an NCO. But then came the

Revolution, and after his unit was disbanded Zhukov went back to his village (official biographies report a long bout of typhoid, though Roberts suggests that he was waiting to see which way the political wind blew). In September 1918, he was plucked from the village again and conscripted into the Red Army, fighting with distinction on various fronts in the Civil War. Like many other Red Army soldiers, he joined the Bolshevik Party in 1919. He was now commissioned as a junior officer, and collected an Order of the Red Banner in 1921 for his service putting down the Tambov rebellion. He also collected a wife, Aleksandra Dievna Zuikova, a schoolteacher he met in Voronezh. According to his daughter Era, Georgy and Aleksandra worked hard together to make up for the deficiencies of his formal education – Aleksandra gave him regular dictations to improve his written Russian.

He was a division commander by 1933 and a corps commander by 1938. There were some bad moments during the Great Purges of 1937-38, in which so many high-ranking military officers perished, but Zhukov was still a step below them, and emerged an (involuntary) beneficiary. In 1939, he was posted to the Mongolian-Manchurian border and came to national prominence for the first time with the defeat of the Japanese at Khalkhin-Gol. This brought him the title of Hero of the Soviet Union and Stalin's personal attention. The two met in the summer of 1940, around the time of Zhukov's promotion to general, and each was impressed by the other. Zhukov found Stalin down to earth, sensible and well-informed on military matters, and wondered why rumour made him out to be such a fearsome character.

The disastrous early years of World War Two destroyed many military reputations, but Zhukov's rose, as the man whose arrival on the scene invariably turned things around. Stalin was the supreme commander of Soviet military forces, but from August 1942 Zhukov was his deputy – in effect, the country's top military man. Commander on a variety of fronts, promoted to marshal in 1943, victor of Stalingrad and Berlin, he was the hero of the hour in May 1945, as Stalin acknowledged by giving him the key role in the victory parade. Some were surprised by this modesty on Stalin's part, but Stalin's son Vasily later claimed that Stalin had fallen off his horse during a rehearsal and decided not to risk it.

After the war, Zhukov headed the Soviet occupation forces in Germany until he was called back to Moscow in March 1946. Typically, Stalin called him back to become commander in chief of Soviet ground forces, then within a few months abruptly

demoted him, first with an appointment as commander of the Odessa military district and then to the even more insignificant job of commander in the Urals. From Stalin's point of view, no doubt, he was too bright a star to be allowed to shine undimmed. It was said that Zhukov was given to exaggerating his own role in the war and spoke disrespectfully of Stalin's. He was dropped from the party Central Committee. Then he was accused of bringing war booty back from Germany, and his apartment and dacha were subjected to a humiliating house search by the security police, resulting in the confiscation of furniture, works of art and jewellery. (Bringing back 'trophy goods' was a common practice among Soviet occupation officers and the authorities generally turned a blind eye, but Zhukov, whose haul included Gobelin tapestries, may have exceeded the norm.) Worst of all, his name was disappearing from histories, books, paintings and films about the war, turning him – like Trotsky, the Red Army's leader in the Civil War – into a non-person. The taboo was starting to lift, however, by the early 1950s, when the new edition of *The Great Soviet Encyclopedia* gave him an entry and he was restored to membership of the Central Committee. According to Roberts, Zhukov felt he was on his way back into Stalin's favour and even hoped to be appointed minister of defence.

Stalin's death intervened, catapulting Zhukov once again up into the heights of Soviet celebrity. As Stalin lay dying, he was urgently summoned to Moscow by Stalin's presumptive heirs, and attended the top-level meeting of 5 March 1953, when dispositions for the post-Stalin era were decided on, including Zhukov's appointment as deputy minister of defence. He was in the military guard of honour at Stalin's funeral on 9 March and, as he later recalled, sincerely mourned him, despite their rocky relations in later years. He did yeoman service for the new 'collective leadership' a few months later, when its most dangerous and ambitious member, the security chief Lavrenty Beria, was ousted and subsequently executed; Zhukov was the man who, at Khrushchev's behest, physically took Beria into custody while the political leaders looked on nervously. In February 1955, he succeeded Bulganin as minister of defence. Accompanying Khrushchev to the Geneva summit in July of the same year, he almost overshadowed his boss, who can scarcely have enjoyed reading *Time*'s characterisation of Zhukov as the 'nearest thing the Soviet Union has to a popular hero; the victorious Red Army [being] its only esteemed public institution'. By 1957, Zhukov was a full

member of the country's top political decision-making body, the Presidium, as the Politburo was then known, an unusual achievement for a professional military man.

Zhukov supported Khrushchev in his ongoing struggle with Molotov, Malenkov and other Stalinist luminaries of the collective leadership. When the challengers seemed on the brink of success in the Presidium in June 1957, Khrushchev and Zhukov had the brilliant notion of taking the matter to an extraordinary plenary meeting of the Central Committee, whose members were flown into Moscow from the provinces on military planes provided by Zhukov. But politics is an ungrateful business. Within a few months of the Anti-Party Group's ousting in the summer of 1957, Khrushchev was starting to find Zhukov and his celebrity intolerable, just as Stalin had done. After a PR triumph with his much publicised tour of Burma and India (where the old cavalryman was photographed on an elephant), Zhukov expected similarly generous coverage of a trip he made to Yugoslavia in the autumn. When it was not forthcoming, he complained to Khrushchev, adding some admonitory words about not offending Yugoslavia (recently readmitted by Khrushchev to Soviet favour, after Stalin's break with Tito) and not kowtowing to China. Though not a public intervention in policy matters, this certainly looked like a departure from the Soviet tradition of strict exclusion of the military from politics, so it's not surprising that Khrushchev concluded (as he recorded in his memoirs) that Zhukov, though a great soldier and wartime commander, 'didn't correctly understand his role as minister of defence'. The upshot was that Zhukov lost his ministerial position and his place in the party leadership and was retired at 61 from the armed forces. Accused by some of his fellow wartime generals of 'Bonapartist tendencies' (another echo of Trotsky's fate), he found himself on the way to non-personhood for the second time, eliminated from official accounts of Stalingrad and other great moments of World War Two.

Khrushchev himself was ousted in 1964, with no Zhukov around this time to rescue him. Under Brezhnev, Zhukov returned to prominence, and was among the marshals reviewing the victory parade from the rostrum above Lenin's mausoleum in May 1965. But by now he was genuinely a retiree, in declining health and preoccupied by personal upheavals. Like Khrushchev in similar circumstances, he was writing his memoirs, but Zhukov's – unlike Khrushchev's, which were dictated in secret – were officially sanctioned, though subject to an onerous process of censorship and editing, first by a military group, to make sure he had got World War Two right, and then by a

committee of historians, responsible inter alia for the implausible statement that, on a trip to the north Caucasus front in 1943, the deputy supreme commander was sorry to have missed meeting Colonel Brezhnev. The memoirs, published in 1969 (beating Khrushchev's unauthorised foreign publication by a year), were a huge popular success and translated into many languages. When Zhukov died in 1974, his state funeral was the 'biggest state occasion in the Soviet Union since the death of Stalin'.

Zhukov was not only a huge celebrity at the time of his death but also a rich man, thanks primarily to the royalties from his memoirs, with an estate eyed hopefully by his heirs, four daughters from three different relationships. His colourful private life is absent from his memoirs, and his biographers tend to be similarly reticent, though Roberts is a bit more forthcoming than most. His book is worth particular attention, however, for its fascinating interweaving of public and private events and for the light it sheds on the changing patterns and possibilities of life among the Soviet elite. In the 1930s, membership of the elite, and Stalin's favour, brought lavish apartments, owned and furnished by the state, dachas also owned by the state and cars that came complete with chauffeurs from state garages. All of this could vanish back where it had come from with the death or disgrace of the head of household. The only real source of personal wealth came from royalties from books or other forms of creative endeavour: the status of writers, artists and composers was extraordinarily high. Until a 1944 law confirmed the right of private inheritance, even such assets as were actually personal property were liable to be taken by the state on their owner's death, but in the postwar period personal and family assets increased markedly in top circles, initially in the form of war booty (German grand pianos sprouting everywhere in elite apartment blocks like the one on Granovsky Street in which the Zhukovs lived, and the 'house on the embankment' immortalised in Yuri Trifonov's novella). Under Khrushchev, it became possible to buy 'co-operative' apartments and dachas, bypassing the established practice of state allocation. For those who could afford them, private cars became an accessible as well as desirable possession.

Zhukov had both old and new kinds of property. Chief among the old was his magnificent dacha at Sosnovka, a two-storey classical mansion – the tsars of Muscovy would have called it a *votchina* – granted to him for his lifetime by Stalin during the war. The Granovsky Street apartment, also state-owned, was assigned to him in the 1940s, as appropriate to his new status. This was the apartment of his official family:

his wife, Aleksandra, and daughters Era and Ella. But over the years Zhukov had acquired a whole set of quasi-familial obligations beyond them. First, there was his illegitimate daughter, Margarita, adopted as a child by one of his military colleagues, who married her mother. Then there was his wartime mistress or 'mobile field wife', Lidia Zakharova, assigned to him as a personal medical assistant during the battle of Moscow and who stayed with him throughout the war: accompanying him to the front in his railway carriage, she would 'give him medicinal powders, cup him [still a standard Soviet practice], massage his back, or simply lift his mood with a tender word', according to the sympathetic recollections of Zhukov's wartime chauffeur. After the war Lidia followed him first to Odessa (making herself scarce when Aleksandra and the daughters visited) and then to Sverdlovsk. In Sverdlovsk, however, Zhukov met and fell in love with a doctor, Galina Semenova, who bore him another daughter, Maria, in 1957, and, after protracted wrangling with Aleksandra over a divorce, became his second wife.

With all these dependants, Zhukov had even more than the usual Soviet need to acquire apartments, rations and other goodies by blat, the ubiquitous system of non-monetary exchange. During the war his official family, evacuated along with the Soviet government to Kuibyshev on the Volga, was well provided for. But the teenage Margarita, losing both her adoptive father and brother as war casualties, fell ill and wrote to her natural father for help – which, with a certain flourish, he did, sending a DC-3 to fly her to a military children's sanatorium for six months to regain her strength. Since he wanted her to go to Moscow State University, he must surely have used blat to get her in. The two legitimate daughters also went to Moscow State University, as the family's status demanded; a meeting with Era engineered by Margarita caused ructions in the Zhukov marriage. When Zhukov returned to Moscow in 1953 he brought Galina with him, and 'organised' an elite apartment for her on Gorky Street, later exchanged for a still more desirable one on Frunze Embankment. Lidia, too, needed to be provided for when their ten-year affair broke up on Galina's appearance a few years earlier: the state apartment Zhukov secured for her was on Pokrovsky Boulevard in Moscow, a respectable address if not in the same league as Granovsky Street.

For most of the 1950s and well into the 1960s, Zhukov was maintaining two households, Aleksandra's and Galina's, shuttling between Granovsky Street and Gorky

Street (easy walking distance) and the Sosnovka dacha. After a while he bought a new dacha for Galina and her daughter in Lesnoi Gorodok. Fortunately, Zhukov had an adjutant to help him manage his complex personal affairs; his main duty (as he told an interviewer in the 1990s) was to look after 'supply' – that is, supplying the two families with food and perks. After the divorce Zhukov gave Aleksandra his Kremlin food ration as well as 200 roubles a month in alimony, and it was the adjutant's duty to collect the goods and deliver them. He was also responsible for looking after the Galina household, which involved some elaborate transactions with furriers (Zhukov's old family connections still held good) and a close collaboration with Galina's mother, who, as babushkas should, ran the household and handled the finances while Galina continued to work as a doctor.

The multiple lives led to endless complications. Margarita, the outsider, made efforts to ingratiate herself with both families, as well as with Zhukov himself, but came to be seen by all of them as something of an extortionist because of her persistent demands for money. They were all put out when she changed her name legally to Zhukov and took Georgievna as her patronymic. The two families were even more annoyed when, after Zhukov's death, Margarita set herself up as a lecturer for the popular science society Znanie, travelling round the country giving talks on 'My Father, Marshal Zhukov'.

In true Soviet style, there were also denunciations. When Aleksandra found out that Lidia had followed Zhukov to Odessa, she called the NKVD's attention to this improper conduct and asked them to expel Lidia from the city. (That didn't work, but Lidia did lose her job as a result.) Over the Galina affair, Aleksandra wrote to the party leadership demanding that Galina and her illegitimate daughter be removed from Moscow and her husband instructed to return to his lawful family. This was not an unusual thing for aggrieved wives to do in the postwar period, at least among the elite: the archives of the Commission of Party Control are full of such denunciations, along with the investigations, adjudications of property claims (mainly dachas and apartments) and attempts at party-sponsored reconciliation they generated. As befitted Zhukov's status, Aleksandra went straight to Khrushchev, who in fact asked Zhukov to give up Galina and return to his family. 'We demote military personnel for extramarital affairs,' Khrushchev claimed (implausibly) in a Presidium discussion of

Zhukov's personal situation – but then there were other issues between them at the time. The question became moot not long afterwards, when Zhukov was fired.

When Zhukov finally divorced Aleksandra and married Galina in 1965, rights to housing were, as usual in Soviet divorces, the sorest point. Aleksandra and her daughter kept the big apartment on Granovsky Street but then exchanged it for two smaller ones. The grand dacha in Sosnovka was inalienable, and in a rather shadowy turn of events Zhukov seems to have ended up selling the recently bought dacha at Lesnoi Gorodok (for a bad price) and to have forced his two families to move to Sosnovka. If he was temporarily short of cash then, the situation soon changed with the publication of his memoirs and their enormous success, though this brought its own problems. Margarita upped her demands; illness and death encroached. Aleksandra, bitter and unreconciled to the divorce, died in 1967; Galina, still in her mid-forties, developed breast cancer and died in 1973. Zhukov made sure that both women got plots in the elite Novodeviche cemetery, which required more blat. Worried about the future of his youngest daughter, Maria, not yet of age, he wrote to the state premier, Aleksei Kosygin, not long before his death asking that an apartment on Aleksei Tolstoy Street be secured for her and her grandmother, and that they also be given a dacha and a car. One of Zhukov's problems was that as he didn't own the Sosnovka dacha, his heirs couldn't inherit it or even (subject to the state's discretion) continue to occupy it. The adjutant was also worried: after Galina's death, he and Galina's mother even briefly considered arranging a marriage between her and Zhukov, which would leave her with widow's rights when he died.

All four daughters showed up at Zhukov's funeral in June 1974, Margarita arriving early and securing a position 'virtually in the first row', so that the offended half-sisters had to ask the organisers to move her. In Zhukov's will, a thousand roubles were to go to Margarita, five thousand each to Era and Ella, and the rest, including royalties, his main asset, along with savings and state bonds, to his youngest daughter, Maria. There were also continuing perks for the first and second lawful families: for the first, registration at an elite medical clinic; for the second, the Kremlin food ration, access to the Kremlin hospital, and life pensions of 150 roubles a month to Maria and 100 roubles to her grandmother. No concession was allowed on the Sosnovka dacha, however, which was repossessed by the state and assigned to another occupant

promptly on the expiry of the forty days' mourning – a nice indication, if the family dating is accurate, of the sneaky way Orthodox practices had crept into Soviet mores.

The unusual wealth of information on Zhukov's private life doesn't come from his memoirs, which follow Soviet conventions of near total reticence on personal matters: it is a by-product of his celebrity. I remember hearing some of it on the Moscow rumour mill in the 1960s and 1970s, but we now have it in print via interviews and recollections of the four daughters (all eager to claim their father's primary allegiance for their own family and correct each other's misinformation), a grandson, a former chauffeur, a former adjutant and many others. (I have drawn extensively here on Irina Mastykina's series of interviews with family and associates published in *Komsomolskaia Pravda* in 1996.) For all their differences, family members are united in seeing Zhukov as a great military man, a person of culture who never abandoned the project of self-education and valued education in others; who was, above all, Russian. He was 'completely Russian by nature', his daughter Era says, 'loved everything Russian: land and people, music and arts, customs and food'. Maria, who embraced religion in the post-Soviet period, even claims, on rather dubious evidence, that he was an Orthodox believer throughout his life, like his parents.

Russian he certainly was, but he was also Soviet and a communist, a quintessential product and beneficiary of the Soviet system who never seems to have doubted its basic rectitude. 'As a committed communist', Roberts writes, he 'supported this system; it was a system he served, a system to which he was loyal, whatever its faults.' This may understate Zhukov's commitment, for he surely saw virtues as well as faults, notably with regard to the conduct of the war, Stalin's leadership, and the opportunities the Revolution had opened up for people like himself. It is likely that, like many of his contemporaries, he genuinely attributed the 'faults' to personalities, Stalin and then Khrushchev, rather than to 'the system', a concept which is in any case anachronistic.

Roberts's biography, research-based but written to reach a broad audience, does a workmanlike job and gives no sense of having an axe to grind: he says he came to the job (a publisher's commission) with a prejudice against Zhukov, as a mythologised and over-eulogised figure, and ended up feeling quite sympathetic towards him. There are some disconcerting mistakes in his handling of Russian material, including treating the first wife Aleksandra's unusual patronymic (Dievna) as if it were her surname and misspelling Margarita's mother's last name (Volokhova, not Volkhova). As he rather

endearingly tells us, his friend and colleague Evan Mawdsley, on whose military history of World War Two he draws extensively, saved him from an even greater solecism, namely mistranslating*gimnazistka*. As anyone with an even passing familiarity with 19th-century Russian history and literature should know, a *gimnazistka* is not a gymnast but a female student, probably from an intelligentsia or noble family, at the tsarist academic high school or *gimnazium*; and the fact that the upwardly mobile young Zhukov selected two *gimnazistki* (Aleksandra and Margarita's mother) as his partners in the 1920s is a biographical datum of some interest.

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Letters

Vol. 35 No. 4 · 21 February 2013

Sheila Fitzpatrick seems oblivious to the main reason anyone would be interested in General Zhukov – namely, his outstanding military skill (*LRB*, 24 January). Given the circumstances that prevailed in the USSR following the Nazi invasion – its officer class heavily reduced by the Purges and then held back by Stalin's bizarre refusal to accept that Hitler had broken his promises – Zhukov started with an enormous handicap compared to the leaders of the other Allied armies. Also, at least until Stalingrad, he had to deal with Stalin's constant interference in military planning, and at the same time worry that if he took one step too far in pushing his case it might lead to summary execution.

Zhukov may not have had the flashy style of Manstein or Guderian, but their abilities were most effective in the Blitzkrieg tactics used early in the war. After Hitler embarked on Operation Barbarossa it soon became evident that Blitzkrieg had had its day and, once he was able to gather the resources, Zhukov decisively out-generalled his opponent. His preparations were meticulous, and he had exceptional strategic insight (he was an excellent chess player). He made extraordinary efforts to build up, train and supply his troops, often going to the front lines to check on preparations before battle. At Moscow and Stalingrad, he was able to build up huge concentrations of troops and armour without the enemy knowing – the Soviet army not only had superb tanks and artillery, but also excelled in camouflage – and then unleash them at precisely the point when the enemy was most extended and vulnerable. By contrast, at Kursk he created an intricate defensive structure that systematically chewed up the Nazi forces despite the best efforts of Manstein, Model and other top generals.

Of course Zhukov used his position in the Soviet hierarchy to his benefit and had a number of overlapping relationships during his life. So what? Surely the important issue is to examine how, in the most difficult conditions, he marshalled the resources of the Soviet state into first holding, then turning the Nazi invasion.

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Outfox them!

Sheila Fitzpatrick

- *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to the Soviet Union 1921-41* by Michael David-Fox
  Oxford, 396 pp, £35.00, January 2012, ISBN 978 0 19 979457 7
- *Moscow, the Fourth Rome: Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism and the Evolution of Soviet Culture, 1931-41* by Katerina Clark
  Harvard, 420 pp, £25.95, November 2011, ISBN 978 0 674 05787 6
- *Being Soviet: Identity, Rumour and Everyday Life under Stalin* by Timothy Johnston
  Oxford, 240 pp, £55.00, August 2011, ISBN 978 0 19 960403 6
- *Stalin's Last Generation: Soviet Postwar Youth and the Emergence of Mature Socialism* byJuliane Fürst
  Oxford, 391 pp, £63.00, September 2010, ISBN 978 0 19 957506 0
- *All This Is Your World: Soviet Tourism at Home and Abroad after Stalin* by Anne Gorsuch
  Oxford, 222 pp, £60.00, August 2011, ISBN 978 0 19 960994 9

The Soviet Union claimed leadership of the world revolution in the 1920s and 1930s – not surprisingly, since of all the European upheavals at the end of the First World War, theirs was the only revolution that succeeded. But the trouble with leading the world revolution, as far as Stalin and his associates were concerned, was that you had to deal with foreigners. Abroad was scarcely less of a problem for them than for Lord Redesdale, immortalised by his Mitford daughters and famous for saying that 'Abroad is unutterably bloody and foreigners are fiends.' The bloodiness of Abroad was something that Stalin and his cohort knew by repute rather than direct experience. Stalin himself made only a couple of brief forays outside the Russian Empire in the years before the First World War, and his political intimates were equally unfamiliar

with Europe and its languages. But the fiendishness of foreigners, or at least of the capitalist exploiters who controlled the affairs of foreign nations, was a given.

It had not always been so. When Lenin's Bolshevik Party took power in Russia in October 1917, it had an abundance of sophisticated, polyglot members, whose years in European exile had made them conversant in several European languages. These former émigrés – including Lenin, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev and Bukharin (in short, all Stalin's major competitors in the power struggle that followed Lenin's death) – were much more strongly represented in the Party leadership under Lenin than the Party's 'committee men', people like Stalin and Molotov who had remained in the Russian Empire as underground revolutionary conspirators pursued, in an endless cat and mouse struggle, by the tsarist political police. Former émigrés were the elite of the Bolshevik Party, offspring for the most part of the nobility and intelligentsia, whose parents could help subsidise their life abroad. They had studied at the academic gymnasium, where French and German were compulsory subjects, unlike the mainly lower-class committee men, whose secondary education, if they had one, was in seminaries (one foreign language required) or trade schools (none).

Used to operating within the cosmopolitan world of the Second International, the Bolshevik leaders under Lenin had the advantage not only of personally knowing their enemies (of whom, being notoriously recalcitrant, they had many), but also of having old friends and acquaintances scattered throughout the world of European socialism. This was useful when they came to create their own Third (Communist) International after the 1917 Revolution. In its first ten years, the Comintern was led by Soviet Politburo members from the former émigré group – first Zinoviev, then Bukharin. Other former émigrés led and staffed the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs. Olga Kameneva, Kamenev's wife and Trotsky's sister, was creator and first head of the quasi-official Society for Cultural Ties with Abroad (VOKS), whose main target group was 'progressive' Western intellectuals. Stalin and his people had little contact with any of these institutions in the 1920s. Lacking foreign languages and cosmopolitan polish, they were ill at ease in the company of the Western-looking Russian intelligentsia – 'crude' men, as Stalin once said of himself, without apology. Crude was bad on the European stage but in the end good in the Russian Communist Party. In the succession struggle after Lenin's death, the crude men won.

Newly acceding to power, Stalin was happy to point out to an interviewer that the cultured European intellectuals who had been so prominent in the Bolshevik Party before the Revolution no longer played a significant political role. He referred specifically to political second-rankers like Anatoly Lunacharsky (the first head of the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment), tactfully failing to mention others who qualified, such as the late Lenin (whom Stalin revered) or the not yet late Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev, his defeated rivals. That was his way of looking on the bright side. Privately he knew that there was a problem, since the Soviet Union had to deal with the outside world and needed cosmopolitan intellectuals to do it. Lunacharsky, in the twilight of his political career, was roped in for foreign liaison duties; so was Karl Radek, even though he had been in the Left Opposition. Maksim Litvinov, a cosmopolitan Old Bolshevik who (untypically for the group) had not been in any of the Oppositions, became Stalin's foreign minister. The Comintern was the biggest problem, at least until Stalin decided that it didn't matter. Once Bukharin was ousted from the leadership, poor Molotov, Stalin's closest associate, had to take over the Comintern, a job he found uncongenial. He took German lessons (Stalin did too), but to little avail. Stalin acquired a few contacts among foreign Communists resident in Moscow (the Indian M.N. Roy, the Finn Otto Kuusinen, the Hungarian economist Eugen Varga), but these people were marginal in the Comintern world of the 1920s. By the time another Stalin contact, the Bulgarian Georgi Dimitrov, took over the Comintern, the institution itself had become marginal in the Soviet world.

It was conventional state-to-state foreign policy that preoccupied Stalin and Molotov in the 1930s. Stalin had various maxims on dealing with the capitalist West: never trust them, recognise their cunning but be sure to outfox them by exploiting their differences. Never forget that they want to destroy the Soviet Union and are just waiting for the next chance to invade. Accept that whether they present themselves as journalists, diplomats or scholars, and regardless of their professed attitudes to the Soviet Union, they are all likely to be spies. This attitude is normally attributed to paranoia, but also surely reflected Stalin's wary sense that he didn't know enough about foreigners to be able to tell if they were whom they claimed to be. Moreover, as Robert Service reminds us in *Spies and Commissars*, in the first, formative years after the Bolshevik Revolution, when almost all the capitalist powers sent military forces to support the Bolsheviks' opponents in the Civil War, most of the resident foreigners,

with the exception of Comintern personnel, were indeed quasi-spies reporting to some foreign intelligence agency, even those with good contacts among 'cosmopolitans' in the Party leadership.[*]

Not being intimidated by foreigners was crucial, which often meant talking tough. 'Give it to them right on the nose,' Stalin advised Molotov on negotiations with the Japanese in 1929. A few years later, he congratulated Molotov on achieving just the right note in one of his speeches on the international situation: 'A tone of contemptuous assurance in relation to the "great" powers, confidence in our strength, a delicately simple spitting in the pot of the swaggering "powers" – very good. Let them "eat it".'

Under Stalin, the Soviet Union closed its borders, trying to keep out the spies but also keeping in the natives. Dealing with and travelling to the West became the prerogative of a diplomatic caste, which until the Great Purges at the end of the 1930s consisted largely of former émigré revolutionaries with foreign languages. As a privileged exception, members of the cultural and political elite could occasionally travel to German or Swiss spas for medical treatment, but their trips had to be approved at Politburo level. Interestingly, the Politburo members themselves, though often ailing, rarely went abroad for treatment or for any other reason. Anastas Mikoian was the sole Politburo member to make a foreign business trip in the 1930s, spending three months in America studying food production and retail trade. To his chagrin, when he and his entourage were fitted out with new clothes suitable for capitalist encounters, they found themselves wearing identical suits, hats and ties.

There was a third dimension to Soviet relations with the outside world: direct contact with (non-Communist) foreign intellectuals. This was an unexpected initiative for the Stalinist regime, given that its leaders were so far from being cosmopolitan intellectuals themselves. To be sure, they were building on foundations laid in the 1920s by cosmopolitans like Olga Kameneva at home and Willi Münzenberg in Europe. But it was in the first Stalinist decade, starting in 1928, that the Soviet outreach efforts really took off, achieving remarkable success in attracting the attention and sympathy of 'progressive' Western intellectuals. Stalin played his part, receiving such luminaries as Lion Feuchtwanger and Romain Rolland, but the main roles were played by intermediaries from the Soviet intelligentsia: the writers Maksim Gorky, whose return from emigration in the late 1920s Stalin counted as one of his triumphs, and Ilya

Ehrenburg, neither of whom belonged to the Party; the Communist journalist and Soviet publishing figure Mikhail Koltsov; and Molotov's boyhood friend Aleksandr Arosev, who succeeded Kameneva as head of VOKS. The aim was to mobilise big-name European intellectuals as 'friends of the Soviet Union', if possible bringing them in to see a socialist society in the making. Visitors like Rolland and Henri Barbusse, who had demonstrated their loyalty, were fêted and acclaimed; conversely, those like Gide who turned critical of the Soviet Union, bitterly disappointing their hosts, were excoriated.

Michael David-Fox's *Showcasing the Great Experiment* is the story of Soviet wooing of the Western intelligentsia, focusing on VOKS under Kameneva and Arosev. About a hundred thousand foreigners visited the Soviet Union in the prewar period, many of them left-leaning intellectuals, and the story of their 'duping' is familiar from Paul Hollander's *Political Pilgrims* (1981). David-Fox makes it a more complicated and more interesting story, with the West seen bamboozling the Kremlin while the Kremlin bamboozles gullible Westerners; the Soviet side is no longer a monolith but includes a variety of players with their own agendas, notably the 'Stalinist Westernisers', intellectuals who actively sought cultural contact with the West. The conflict between Soviet feelings of inferiority and superiority is crucial to David-Fox's picture – perhaps too crucial, since the cosmopolitan intellectuals didn't suffer from it as the Communist leaders did. People like Koltsov and Ehrenburg felt themselves to be on a more or less equal footing with their Western counterparts. This was understandable as (*pace*Hollander) they had a lot to offer. It was not just the Great Experiment in social engineering that the foreign intellectuals and artists came to observe, but also the international cutting edge in theatre and the cinema (as represented, for example, by Meyerhold and Eisenstein) and in the theory of education (Makarenko). For all the complaints about VOKS's over-controlling and bureaucratic approach, that was basically what VOKS wanted to show them.

David-Fox argues that historians have consistently underestimated the 'centrality of Western eyes' in Soviet self-understanding or, to put it differently, the degree to which Soviet leaders worried about how their actions would look in the West. This could reach ludicrous proportions: when the 1937 census came in millions short of the projected population figures, virtually the first thought of the Soviet leaders, as the archives reveal, was that it would lend credence to Western allegations of famine. The census was suppressed.

More radical than David-Fox, Katerina Clark even suggests that a mission of international leadership was central to Stalinism: not leadership of world Communism, as one might expect, but leadership of 'world culture'. As Muscovy had once dreamed of becoming a Third Rome, standard-bearer of Christianity, so Stalinist Russia would be a Fourth Rome (the metaphor is Clark's, not Stalin's), the world's exemplar of secular civilisation.

The standard story of the mid-1930s is that it was the era of the Great Retreat, when the Stalinist leadership abandoned revolutionary internationalism and settled for a Soviet version of Russian nationalism, while at the same time jettisoning avant-garde art in favour of traditional cultural forms. Clark proposes instead that we think of a Great Appropriation, involving a simultaneous embrace of European culture and Russia's own cultural heritage. High culture, Soviet spokesmen claimed, had never been so warmly appreciated as it was in the Soviet Union: no other country honoured its culture-bearing intelligentsia so much. The commitment to European culture was symbolised by the rebuilding of Moscow in a monumental style that combined Renaissance with classical elements. Translation of European literary classics into Russian (and of European and Russian classics into other languages of the Soviet Union) became a huge industry, to the point that Soviet boosters claimed that Soviet readers knew Shakespeare better than the British.

Clark focuses on several of the same intellectual brokers as David-Fox, though she calls the group 'cosmopolitan patriots' instead of 'Stalinist Westernisers'. We meet Ehrenburg and Koltsov again, the latter flanked by his partner in the 1930s, the glamorous and popular young German Communist Maria Osten; Eisenstein and the avant-garde writer Sergei Tretiakov also have central roles. These four (two of them Jewish, all of them fluent German speakers) exemplify the Soviet intellectuals and artists who saw themselves as 'part of a pan-European intellectual space' that included Lukács, Brecht, Benjamin, Heinrich and Thomas Mann, Hemingway and Malraux. A key moment in the Soviet bid for leadership of a world culture threatened by Fascism was the 1935 Paris Congress for the Defence of Culture, attended by everyone who mattered in the left-wing intelligentsia. Many of the same people showed up for the Spanish Civil War the next year, memorialised in Koltsov's *Spanish Diary*, Malraux's *Man's Hope* and Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (featuring characters based on Koltsov and Maria Osten). Not that it was necessary to leave

Moscow to encounter the flower of the cosmopolitan culture of the European left, since thousands of German-speaking intellectuals had been driven into exile there by the rise of Nazism.

Clark is primarily interested in culture, not politics. But her work raises interesting questions about how policy emerged in the Stalinist Soviet Union. If a cosmopolitan tendency did indeed hold sway in the 1930s, should we attribute this primarily to influential intellectuals who were 'cosmopolitan by inclination' or to their political masters, who were not? Of course, Koltsov and the rest were dependent on Stalin's continued patronage and approval, just as Litvinov was in foreign policy. Yet as the French historian Sabine Dullin showed in *Men of Influence: Stalin's Diplomats in Europe, 1930-39* (2008), the main lines of Soviet foreign policy up to 1939 were crafted by the cosmopolitan 'expert' Litvinov, though under Stalin and Molotov's watchful eyes, with many disagreements, lots of tutelary lectures from Stalin, and never anything resembling a blank cheque. Perhaps the same was true of the Westernising intellectuals.

The Great Purges of the late 1930s mark a shift in both Clark's book and David-Fox's. Many of the Stalinist Westernisers (including Koltsov, Tretiakov and Arosev) were killed, along with Comintern functionaries, German literary exiles and many other resident foreigners. Litvinov survived, though embittered, but Molotov's German tutor vanished into the Gulag, leaving him to take over Litvinov's job and conclude the Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact still unable to understand Ribbentrop without interpreters. At this point (1939), the young British historian Timothy Johnston takes up the story, though with a different slant: unlike David-Fox and Clark, he focuses on popular opinion, particularly opinion about foreigners and international affairs. His main sources are the reports on 'popular mood' regularly compiled by security, police and regional Party officials, along with the official Soviet press. There's a whiff of the dissertation in Johnston's *Being Soviet*: readers may become irritated by the appearance every few pages of the term 'bricolage', signifying Soviet citizens' sensible habit of taking on board only the bits of official propaganda that made sense to them and ignoring the rest. Still, that's an improvement on the assumption – common in some earlier scholarship – that brainwashed Soviet citizens believed everything the regime told them.

Johnston's Soviet citizens are as indignant as the regime about the Allies' slowness to open a second front during the war, and more inclined to attribute it to bad faith. They are not particularly grateful for Lend-Lease, and often criticise the quality of the goods the Allies shipped under the programme. In Arkhangelsk, on which Johnston has gathered some of his most interesting data, the popular attitude to the British troops in residence was marked by a certain reserve, but local women and children, more curious than the men and interested in the consumer goods the soldiers had to offer, were often ready for fraternisation. It all sounds very much like British wartime reactions to American troops and their supplies of cigarettes, chocolates and nylons.

The Second World War Alliance had some unexpected by-products, including the first Russian-language journals produced by foreigners for Soviet readers since the Revolution. The British Embassy put out *Britansky soiuznik* (the 'British Ally'), which sounds stodgy but was in fact rather lively, and the Americans published *Amerika*, a title conjuring up exotic new worlds for the Soviet reader. Copies of both disappeared instantly from kiosks. The Soviets continued to publish their own journal of world culture, *International Literature*, in several languages, as they had done throughout the 1930s. While the German exiles who had dominated its German edition in the 1930s were gone, the Russian and English editions took over as the cutting edge under a young anglophile editor with excellent political connections.

It's striking, given the fate of many of the old Stalinist Westernisers in the Great Purges, that a new Westernising cohort, oriented more towards Anglo-American culture than Germanic, emerged so quickly. Many of them, including the new director of VOKS, came from MIFLI, the elite Moscow Institute of Philosophy, Literature and History. But their heyday was relatively short. Soon after the war, *Britansky soiuznik* and *Amerika* were closed down, and most of their Soviet staff arrested. The Russian edition of *International Literature* didn't even make it until the end of the war. Its editor and his actress wife were arrested, despite their connections in the Central Committee, and charged with fraternising with foreign spies.

By the second half of the 1940s cosmopolitanism was not only out but the target of an 'anti-cosmopolitan' campaign. This was not confined to Jews, as is often thought, although that is the way it developed. At first, it was just as much against foreigners and the people who associated with them. The group included scientists interested in international collaboration, composers who were allegedly more interested in elitist

European modernism than popular folksongs, Latvian sailors who told stories of the good life in Western ports, soldiers who returned from Berlin impressed by the German standard of living, women who had married foreigners during the war, anyone who openly admired Western culture and denigrated Russian, and so on. As the major target, the Russian intelligentsia, with its irrepressible Westernising tendencies and large Jewish component, was traumatised. Johnston's reports on popular opinion suggest that people outside the intelligentsia were largely unmoved. There was some pride in the Soviet Union's new international status, but the strongest popular emotion about the outside world seems to have been fear of a new war and another foreign invasion. Johnston notes that the official peace movement launched at this time was 'unusually successful' with the public.

A different though not necessarily contradictory picture comes from Juliane Fürst's *Stalin's Last Generation*, which deals with the cohort that was too young to fight in the war but grew up in its shadow in the 1940s and early 1950s. She shows this cohort – or at least the urban and metropolitan part of it that is her real subject – to be as intrigued by Abroad as Lord Redesdale's children, despite hearing so often that foreigners were fiends. Young people's infatuation with the West is often seen as a characteristic of the post-Stalin era, but Fürst – like Mark Edele before her – points out that the *stiliagi*, young lovers of jazz and homemade 'American' clothing, were already a countercultural phenomenon in the immediate postwar period, years before the Thaw. *Stiliagi* were a bit like Soviet Mods or Teddy Boys, but without the working-class resentments of the British groups: their statement was aesthetic rather than political. Young men like Vasily Aksenov, future novelist and jazz aficionado, were the peacocks of the counterculture: still an adolescent in Kazan, he managed to acquire a reindeer sweater like the one in the 1941 Hollywood movie *Sun Valley Serenade*. Nor was it only *stiliagi* who watched *Sun Valley Serenade*. Nitpicking censorship and other difficulties having brought Soviet film production almost to a standstill in the postwar years, the regime was forced to substitute Western 'trophy' films (booty from Germany), with the result that a whole generation grew up on *Tarzan*, alongside the wildly popular German-Hungarian film*Girl of My Dreams*, starring Marika Rökk. The Komsomol looked disapprovingly on the extravagant outfits of the *stiliagi*, and dutifully passed on the message of the anti-cosmopolitan campaign. In Fürst's account,

however, young people tended to be baffled rather than threatened by the campaign (unless they were Jewish) and didn't stop dreaming of reindeer sweaters and Marika.

Given the proclivities of Fürst's 'last Stalinist generation', the Thaw of the mid-1950s seems a natural outcome. Khrushchev's policy of peaceful co-existence and cultural opening to the West was welcomed; the international Moscow Youth Festival of 1957 was a tremendous success (though all that fraternisation worried the KGB); Dior was invited to Moscow to put on a fashion show; and Muscovites flocked to the 1959 exhibition of American consumer goods at which Khrushchev and Nixon held their famous 'kitchen debate'. The intelligentsia rejoiced in its new access to Western high culture, young people began a love affair with American pop culture and the whole urban population started to covet Western consumer goods. Polish cosmetics and Czech furniture, though not as glamorous as French or Scandinavian, were sought after, and the 'people's democracies' of Eastern Europe found a new function as cultural bridge between the Soviet Union and the West.

Foreign tourism, largely cut off in the late 1930s, was officially renewed in March 1954. It was a two-way process, but Anne Gorsuch's book focuses on the travel of Soviet citizens abroad. Khrushchev himself may be regarded as the first great Soviet tourist, admiring American hotdogs and highways as well as French irrigation schemes, though not forgetting to remind the capitalist powers that the Soviet Union would soon overtake them, even in the consumer realm. Half a million Soviet tourists travelled to foreign countries in 1956, and ten years later the number had doubled. Most Soviet tourists went to Eastern Europe, but a significant minority got to see Paris and other great cities of the West. Tourism was a privilege, but tourism to capitalist countries was a still greater privilege, with a more rigorous selection process. Tourists travelled in groups with tightly organised itineraries and were encouraged to keep each other under surveillance and behave appropriately as ambassadors for their country. The familiar Soviet narrative emphasises the *Alice in Wonderland* effect of foreign tourism: in the words of one Soviet traveller to Rome, 'I felt as if I was in some kind of fairytale dream.' But Gorsuch concludes that the majority of Soviet tourists, though (sometimes grudgingly) impressed by the West, still maintained a sturdy 'home's best' approach in the face of its temptations.

'Show how cultured you are, don't let yourself be intimidated' was the message to Soviet tourists preparing to face the dangerous but seductive West. That's a far cry

from Moscow as Fourth Rome. The rebuilding of Moscow continued yet more grandly after the war, with seven new skyscrapers built in 'wedding cake' style transforming the horizon. But there was too much defensiveness in this xenophobic period to support a Soviet sense of cultural mission. Even in dealings with postwar Eastern Europe, in theory a periphery to the Soviet socialist metropolis, Soviet attempts to project cultural authority foundered on the locals' stubborn belief that, as Europeans, they were the superior ones. This makes one wonder how much the vaulting ambitions of the 1930s owed to the energy, not yet dissipated, of the Revolution, for on the face of it the Soviet Union was in a much stronger international position after the Great Patriotic War than it had been before. The 'world's first socialist state' was not only a victor in the war but now one of two superpowers – though, like Britain, it was also in a state of postwar exhaustion, rather than reinvigoration, like the United States. No doubt leadership of world culture had always been a mirage, but Soviet grandiosity had a new element of klutziness in the postwar period. As Clark wryly points out, there was a 'slight mathematical mismatch' in the claim that the eight new 'wedding cake' skyscrapers represented the seven hills of Rome.

Khrushchev's promise that full Communism was around the corner suggests that Soviet utopianism was not totally dead, and the cosmonauts' achievements in space gave new backing to what Gorsuch calls 'Soviet narratives of superiority'. Sputnik was a source of enormous pride among the population as well as the political leadership, as James Andrews and Asif Siddiqi demonstrate in *Into the Cosmos*.[†]ß But not even Sputnik could bring back the old conviction of a destiny to lead. Moscow as Fourth Rome had been a vision of moral and spiritual leadership. Now a jarring materialist theme crept in: to the politicians as well as the public, leadership was starting to mean primacy in consumer goods. The Cold War strategy of bombardment with nylon stockings and dishwashers (recommended, tongue in cheek, by the American sociologist David Riesman in 1951) had paid off. It was not enough, it appeared, to let Soviet tourists out with meagre allocations of hard currency to window-shop in the West. The borders had to be open, and New Russians with dollars and euros in their pockets had to be able to buy. For all the current post-Soviet nostalgia for Stalinism, nobody in Russia wants to go back to closed borders: for post-Soviet Russians, the freedom that really matters seems to be the freedom to travel. The loss of the old superpower status is still mourned in Russia, where a prevailing assertive Russian

nationalism betrays a suspicion that it is Russia's destiny to lag behind the West. Moscow has been revamped once again, but not in the image of a Fourth Rome. Forget utopian visions: what matters is access to the really existing Rome, where Russian tourists, less immediately identifiable by their clothing than in Soviet times, can drink espresso on the Via Veneto.

[*] Macmillan, 440 pp., £25, November 2011, 978 0 230 74807 1

[†] Pittsburgh, 384 pp., £25.95, September 2011, 978 0 8229 6161 1

The Old Man

Sheila Fitzpatrick

- *Trotsky: A Biography* by Robert Service
  Macmillan, 600 pp, £9.99, April 2010, ISBN 978 0 330 43969 5
- *Stalin's Nemesis: The Exile and Murder of Leon Trotsky* by Bertrand Patenaude
  Faber, 472 pp, £9.99, March 2010, ISBN 978 0 571 22876 8

When Isaac Deutscher was writing his great three-volume biography in the 1950s, Leon Trotsky was a name to conjure with. The first volume came out in 1954, a year after Stalin's death and 14 years after Trotsky's murder in Mexico by Stalin's agent. The epic battle between the two antagonists was still fresh in people's minds; all over the world, small stubborn groups of 'Trotskyites' fought the Stalinists in official Communist Parties. Trotsky's works were widely read and translated into many languages, especially the brilliant *History of the Russian Revolution* and *The Revolution Betrayed*, as was Deutscher's biography, based on the Trotsky archives at Harvard and in Amsterdam. In Deutscher's account, Trotsky was the revolution's 'prophet', armed in the first volume, unarmed in the second and outcast in the third. Love him or hate him, Trotsky – organiser of the October seizure of power, charismatic leader of the Red Army during the Civil War – seemed a man for the ages, one of the great figures of the 20th century.

Trotsky's vilification by Stalin was part of the epic. It started in the 1920s with a succession struggle in which Trotsky, the most famous man in Russia after Lenin, was one major contender and Stalin the other. A weakness of Trotsky's position was that he had joined the Bolsheviks so late: not until the summer of 1917, after years of attacking Lenin as the splitter of the social democratic movement. Stalin and his supporters

played this for all it was worth, dredging up Trotsky's most vicious attacks on Lenin from before the Revolution, and were equally successful in representing him as a cosmopolitan Jewish intellectual unsuited to lead a (Russian) workers' party. His political fall after Lenin's death in 1924 was spectacular in its speed and depth. By 1927, Stalin felt in a strong enough position to engineer Trotsky's expulsion from the Party; a few months later he was exiled to Alma-Ata in Kazakhstan; and by 1929, in a remarkable gesture of repudiation, he was deported from the Soviet Union altogether 'for "anti-Soviet work"'. That wasn't the end of the story: Stalin's obsession with Trotsky grew in absentia. In the Soviet Union and the international Communist movement he was the demon driving counter-revolution throughout the world, a traitor in league with foreign intelligence services, and ultimately with Fascism; and in the Moscow show trials of the late 1930s an array of Old Bolshevik defendants – some of them his former supporters, others not – were convicted of being agents of his conspiracy against the Soviet Union and executed. He was now 'Judas-Trotsky', a creature so inhuman he couldn't even be referred to by name and patronymic.

His destruction had been on the agenda of Soviet intelligence for some years before the show trials; Stalin was reportedly angry that it was taking so long. But there were complications. From the standpoint of European governments, Trotsky was the arch-revolutionary, not the arch-counter-revolutionary, hence an undesirable immigrant. When the Turks finally agreed to take him in, they made it a condition that there should be no Soviet assassination attempts while he was on Turkish soil. After Turkey, Trotsky embarked on a dismal odyssey in which he tried to find a European resting place while various European states, unwilling to add another problem to their relations with the Soviet Union, thought up reasons not to let him stay – the Labour government in Britain played a particularly shabby role. He was an embarrassment to the left, which was even more responsive than the right to Soviet pressure. Finally, thanks to the support of Diego Rivera and the willingness of Mexico's left-wing president to stand up to the local Communist Party, he found a haven, if not a safe one, in Coyoacán until his murder in 1940.

In the Soviet Union, Trotsky remained a villain and a non-person almost to the end. Khrushchev rehabilitated some of the Old Bolsheviks killed by Stalin, but he had no interest in rehabilitating Trotsky. Nor did anyone else, apparently. In the 1960s, reform-minded Soviet intellectuals agitated, unsuccessfully, for the rehabilitation of

another of Stalin's old opponents, Nikolai Bukharin. But Bukharin, unlike Trotsky, was seen as a moderate, someone who might have represented an alternative to Stalinism and who could be invoked by advocates of a return to the economic policies of the 1920s. When Gorbachev, intellectually formed in the 1960s, came to power 20 years later, he formally rehabilitated Bukharin. Not Trotsky, however (though Robert Service oddly implies the contrary): like most other Soviet Communists, Gorbachev still had the instinctive revulsion against him acquired in his youth. Even in 1987, he still regarded Trotsky as the quintessential anti-Leninist, though he did allow him to be discussed in print. There was a small surge of interest in Trotsky among Soviet intellectuals in the late 1980s, but the collapse of the Soviet Union ensured that it was short-lived.

In 1992 Dmitri Volkogonov, a former general in the Soviet army who had made a splash a few years earlier with a revisionist biography of Stalin, came out with a sensational Trotsky biography (published in English in 1996), drawing on new sources, including the NKVD secret archives and the insider testimony of his friend Pavel Sudoplatov, the high-ranking NKVD officer charged by Stalin with organising Trotsky's murder. Volkogonov was well along in his political evolution from anti-Stalinist Leninist to anti-Leninist when he wrote the Trotsky biography. Thus, while his Trotsky was a Leninist revolutionary (major revisionism in Soviet terms), Volkogonov no longer approved of Leninist revolutionaries. Lenin, Stalin, Trotsky: they were all men of blood to him now, historically almost indistinguishable from each other. Still, there was a tinge of admiration for the outsize personality, along with astonishment that the demon proved to be human.

Is it time, then, for a new biography? Robert Service notes that his is 'the first full-length biography of Trotsky written by someone outside Russia who is not a Trotskyist'. True, if not necessarily sufficient. Service is already the author of biographies of Lenin and Stalin, however, and these things run in threes, or at least publishers would like them to. In contrast to Deutscher, who was first into the Harvard archive and had unique (at the time) access to its closed section, or Volkogonov, who had the scoop on Stalin's hunt for the kill, Service has no major new sources to offer, though he has conscientiously mined the many old ones. An underlying agenda, no doubt, is to correct the picture drawn by Deutscher and by Trotsky himself, which Service sees as over-sympathetic on Deutscher's part and self-serving on Trotsky's, but

he keeps this out of the text (and doesn't use the footnotes to quarrel with other historians). Some reviewers have seen Service as hostile to his subject, but I see it not so much as hostility as a satisfaction in being indifferent – the kind of passive-aggressive approach that can give objectivity a bad name. A sour note prevails; each grudging positive assessment is balanced by a negative, and the two are never measured against each other because that would involve giving an opinion. Needless to say, the book's less fun to read than Deutscher or Volkogonov.

Trotsky, however, was not a man for fun. Characterised by Service as more puritanical even than Lenin, he insisted on punctuality, accuracy and polished shoes (even during the Civil War) and led a highly disciplined life, if you don't count the bouts of sickness and fainting that regularly put him out of commission at critical moments. It is ironic that present-day biographers feel obliged to foreground his love affairs (with the British artist Clare Sheridan during the Civil War and the Mexican Frida Kahlo two decades later) when there were so few, especially for such a striking and charismatic public figure, and those there were so brief. To his second wife, Natalia Sedova, he was quite an exemplary husband (if you like the dominant type around whom the household must revolve), though Service scolds him for abandoning his first wife and failing to give the necessary emotional support to his schizophrenic daughter, Zina, who killed herself in Berlin in 1933. But intimacy was not one of his talents. As his contemporary Anatoly Lunacharsky put it, 'he had immense imperiousness and an inability or unwillingness to be in any way kind or attentive to people.' In other words, he was the anti-Bill-Clinton of the Russian Revolution, and it cost him.

All this, Trotsky might object, is trivial: what matters is his service to the Revolution, his contribution as a Marxist theorist and publicist, and the force of his indictment of Stalinism. On his service to the Revolution, the big doubter was Stalin, who made tremendous efforts to write Trotsky out of the historical record. But in the long run it didn't stick, at least not outside the former Soviet Union. Trotsky is a towering figure in almost all (non-Soviet) histories of the October Revolution, including his own (though in *Red October* the late Robert Daniels argued that he was a brilliant rationaliser of events whose post factum claims to have planned everything in advance should be taken with a grain of salt). Service's account is conventional except for its brevity – Chapter 19 on the 'Seizure of Power' takes up a mere nine pages – and dryness, which puts it in a different emotional world from Deutscher, for whom the word 'revolution'

was sacred and October an awe-inspiring moment in human history. It's the same for the Civil War. Service, like Deutscher, gives Trotsky high marks for creating the Red Army and leading it to victory; the difference is that, for Deutscher, that victory really mattered. Volkogonov and other post-Soviet Russian historians have made a big point of Trotsky's ruthlessness in the Civil War and his willingness to impose discipline by shooting. Service has the same view, but he presents it more matter of factly and doesn't see it as distinguishing Trotsky from Lenin or the Bolshevik leadership in general. If there were a finest hour in Service's story (a convention of heroic biography he scorns), it would be the Civil War, which brought to the fore Trotsky's courage, efficiency and organising ability. Service even gives Trotsky credit for not having fallen in love with war, despite his (much criticised) suggestion that the discipline and precision of military life would be useful for Russia's working class.

As a politician, Trotsky gets low marks from Service. First of all, he was extremely skittish about taking important jobs. This started in October 1917 when, to Lenin's bewilderment, he refused to allow discussion of Lenin's proposal that he head the government ('Why ever not?' Lenin asked. 'It was you who stood at the head of the Petrograd Soviet that seized the power.') In the end, Lenin took that job – the chairmanship of Sovnarkom – himself. After the Civil War, Trotsky refused to serve as Lenin's first deputy at Sovnarkom, a position that would have made him the likely successor when Lenin died and given him an institutional base to set against Stalin's base in the Party. Equally damaging to Trotsky's political prospects were his ineptness at factional organisation and remoteness from his followers. The greatest disadvantage of all, however, was that he not only disliked politics but also, more surprisingly, seems to have lacked any strong desire to become leader. This is clearer in Service than it was in Deutscher, whose Trotsky desired (or was willing to assume) the role of Lenin's successor but was too proud to fight for it. Service's Trotsky simply doesn't want the job, though he doesn't want anyone else to get it either. Vulnerable as a Johnny-come-lately in the Bolshevik Party, outmanoeuvred by Stalin at every turn, Trotsky was fighting not to be sole leader but to prevent Stalin from pushing him out of the leadership group altogether. Service's description of all this is convincing, though he doesn't explain – or not satisfactorily – why Trotsky felt that way. Out of respect for Lenin and a sense that his role had been unique? Because he was a Jew, and he didn't think a Jewish leader would be popularly acceptable in Russia? Perhaps (my thought,

not Service's) he just didn't think parties had to have single leaders. He hadn't liked it in the early 1900s when Lenin split with the mainstream of Russian social democracy and established himself, contrary to revolutionary tradition, as the Bolsheviks' undisputed leader. He may still, for all his later respect for and attachment to Lenin, have seen this as an aberration.

In 1917, when Trotsky was busy refusing top jobs in the new government, his preference, apparently, would have been to act as the new government's press officer. In hindsight, one might feel that that would have been an incredible waste of talent, but Trotsky thought writing mattered – and it was what he liked to do. 'He simply loved to be seated at a desk, fountain pen in hand, scribbling out the latest opus,' Service writes. 'Nobody dared disturb him when the flow of words was forming in his head. He accustomed his family, servants and personal assistants to these habits.' He kept it up even during the Civil War; and in the first years of peace he wrote so much and on such varied topics (including everyday life and literature) that the Politburo asked him to cut back and pay more attention to 'practical discussions inside the leadership'. He didn't take any notice, of course. Trotsky had little respect for his Politburo colleagues, with the exception of Lenin; and he was conducting himself, in Service's words, 'as he thought a revolutionary thinker and leader ought to do'.

Deutscher greatly admired both the style and the content of Trotsky's writings, but Service isn't so keen. To be sure, Trotsky had intellect and an elegant prose style; he was an 'outstanding publicist', unrivalled in the Party for his range of cultural reference. But as a Marxist theorist, in Service's opinion, he wasn't on the level of Lenin, Plekhanov or Bogdanov because he didn't offer a total system. 'Intellectually he flitted from topic to topic'; he loved argument for its own sake, which 'involved an ultimate lack of seriousness as an intellectual'. An ungrateful reaction from a biographer, one might think. But Service is also critical of the content of some of Trotsky's political writing. While he agrees with the scholarly consensus that Stalin appropriated the position of the Left Opposition on such matters as industrialisation and collectivisation, he thinks Trotsky's retrospective accounts exaggerated the coherence of his policy positions. This they undoubtedly did, particularly as it was one of Stalin's talents to provoke Trotsky into arguments he would have done better to avoid. But Service uses the word 'self-serving' for Trotsky's writing too often. Does this distinguish him from other political figures who have written retrospectively of their

political lives? If anything, Trotsky seems more capable than most of detached analysis. The problem, perhaps, is that he is always so confident he's got it right that a biographer, like Trotsky's associates in life, may feel bullied.

One of the things he was sure he had got right was that Stalin was a nonentity, somebody who had achieved victory in the political struggle of the 1920s unfairly, by what Trotsky liked to call 'bureaucratic' manipulations. By that, he meant that Stalin in his capacity of general secretary ran the Party bureaucracy and was able to rally support within it – an illegitimate activity only if you took the Party's ban on factions literally, which in practice nobody did, not even Trotsky. The idea that Stalin was a nonentity bedevilled Western scholarship for years, though it now seems finally to have been laid to rest. Equally wrong-headed was Trotsky's deduction that Stalin must be the bureaucracy's creature rather than its master. That said, the analysis he gave in *The Revolution Betrayed* of the Party's Thermidorian degeneration and the rise of a privileged New Class (to use Milovan Djilas's later term) has had an enormous influence; even Service concedes that he 'proved persuasive about the "bureaucratisation" of the Soviet order'.

Would the Soviet Union have fared better under Trotsky's leadership than Stalin's? Service takes the position, increasingly common in recent scholarship, that it was six of one and half a dozen of the other. He's surprised at 'the number of people who had no sympathy for Communism and yet accepted the idea that the USSR would not have been a totalitarian despotism under Trotskyist rule'. For Service, Trotsky was 'close to Stalin in intentions and practice. He was no more likely than Stalin to create a society of humanitarian socialism even though he claimed and assumed that he would.' He 'revelled in terror' and was 'a ruthless centraliser and a friend of army and police'. 'As soon as he had power, he eagerly suppressed popular aspirations by violence.'

This is implicitly directed not only against those who (like Trotsky and Stalin themselves) have considered Trotsky and Stalin to be polar opposites, but also against wishful thinkers who assume that, because Trotsky was the more congenial personality and powerful intellect, he would have done a better job. One could quibble sentence by sentence, but Service's basic point that Trotsky, like Stalin, was tough, willing to shed blood, and not a liberal democrat is surely correct. The oddness in this kind of argument is its heavy investment in historical inevitability: the outcome ('socialism', 'totalitarian despotism') is going to be the same, no matter what. One could understand

this from a Marxist (even though in this case it's the Marxists who reject the argument), but what is Service doing in the inevitability camp? The answer, no doubt, is that he thinks that anyone who suggests that more than one outcome was possible is trying to smuggle in the idea that it could have ended well. What Service means is that, regardless of whether it was Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin or any of the other Bolshevik revolutionaries in charge, it was bound to end badly.

It's almost a relief to find Service finally taking a political and emotional position, after all that above-the-battle detachment. Still, it strikes me as an intellectual cop-out. Granted 'what if' history has its pitfalls, but does it make sense to say that, with Trotsky in power from the end of the 1920s rather than Stalin, everything would have turned out the same? In the first place, assuming that he adopted similarly radical policies, and encountered at least some of the same problems as a result, we don't know that Trotsky would have been able either to hold the Party together (not his forte, as we have seen) or to prevent popular revolt. But suppose he had succeeded in those basic tasks, and done (as one might expect) a good job leading the country in the Second World War, is it remotely plausible that he would have become paranoid about Jews after the war and launched the 'anti-cosmopolitan' campaign? Or that before the war he would have thought that the Party was full of 'enemies of the people' conspiring to destroy the Soviet Union, and mounted such a wild, crazy, undisciplined witchhunt as the Great Purges? Trotsky and Stalin had things in common, but the paranoid style wasn't one of them. Of course Soviet history would have been different without Stalin. Or with Trotsky. Or even – since all history obeys the laws of chaos theory – just with a few extra butterfly wings flapping up in the Pamirs …

There wasn't a great deal of doubt about the outcome for Trotsky, however, once Stalin had decided to kill him. The last years of Trotsky's life are the subject of Bertrand Patenaude's book, and although it's not the first time this story has been told – Isaac Deutscher's third volume, *The Prophet Outcast*, covers the same territory – it remains gripping. Patenaude's focus is on the hunt from the point of view of the hunted, not the hunter (that's Volkogonov and Sudoplatov territory). He tells it as an adventure-cum-spy story, with an abundance of Mexican context and atmosphere (probably its strongest point) and a lot of information on the array of young assistants – some of them Stalin's men, others American Trotskyists, the majority future memoirists – who came and went. The personal and family side of Trotsky's life is covered in detail too,

based largely on the Harvard archive and the assistants' reports. Sometimes it reads a little like a movie in the making, as in the lead-up to the murder itself, when the murderer, Mercader/ Jacson, arrives at teatime and finds Trotsky tending his rabbits: Trotsky 'closed the doors to the hutches, brushed off his blue denim jacket, and began to walk towards the house. Natalia accompanied them to the door of the study, which Trotsky closed behind him … Suddenly a terrible cry pierced the afternoon quiet.'

The book is written for a popular audience, though carefully researched, with endnotes and a list of archival and published sources. No time is wasted disputing earlier scholarly accounts (not even indirectly disputing them, as Service does). There is little comment on the substance of Trotsky's ideas or his revolutionary activities, except in so far as they impinge on his personal life, as in the case of his son Lev Sedov, who was his tireless political agent in Berlin and Paris. (Patenaude returns an open verdict on whether Sedov's sudden death in a Paris clinic in 1938 was murder on Stalin's orders; Service, in a slightly more detailed account, comes to the same conclusion.)

Trotsky and Natalia arrived in Mexico early in 1937, and at first found it liberating: they liked the Blue House which Diego Rivera had made available to them; they took some car trips; Trotsky went hunting and fishing; he had his fling with Kahlo. But as the hunt got closer, the Blue House and its successor turned into fortresses; the household lived behind barricaded doors and windows, and everybody's nerves were strained. But the Old Man, as his assistants called him, kept writing, writing, writing – to rebut the accusations made against him at the Moscow trials, to publicise Stalin's crimes and to analyse the root of them, to keep in contact with his followers, and for the practical reason that income from his writing was what they lived on. Finally, after some failed attempts, the murder was carried out rather bunglingly by Ramón Mercader, acting on Stalin's orders under the direction of Leonid Eitingon (Eitingon was in Mexico for the event, along with Ramón's mother, Caridad, whose part in this tangled story is explained in Mary-Kay Wilmers's *The Eitingons*).[*] The weapon, known in legend as the ice-pick, was a mountaineer's ice-axe, according to Service, and something like a prospector's pick, according to Patenaude; neither of these clarifications left me much the wiser.

Patenaude ends with a quotation – sympathetic, if a touch condescending – from one of the American assistants: 'Optimism was all he really had.' Service is more cruel: 'Death came early to him because he fought for a cause that was more destructive than

he had ever imagined.' Is there a hint of 'got what he deserved' there? In any case, it's a far cry from Deutscher, who entitled his last chapter 'Victory in Defeat', and bade farewell to Trotsky as one who, with his blood, 'nourished the seed of the future'. Volkogonov, always critical of Trotsky's lack of appreciation of things Russian, takes the prize for most bizarre conclusion with a final comment faulting the exiled Trotsky for lack of homesickness: 'where there should have been a longing to see his country once again, there was only a desire for revolution.'

Of course, it wasn't Russia but Ukraine, in contemporary terms, that was Trotsky's homeland. It occurred to me to try a Google search to find out if Trotsky, as a native son, has picked up any admirers there. Sure enough, a Ukrainian diaspora site claims him (www.ukrainians.ca/celebrities/2087-leon-trotsky-and-ukraine-arrogant-ruthless-and-ukrainian). What a find, I thought; fragments of the past preserved in popular memory. Well, not exactly. Judging by Google hits, Trotsky remains famous throughout the world, though less in the former Soviet Union than elsewhere; but in Russia and Ukraine a good share of his fame comes from the American biopic *Frida*, based on the life of Frida Kahlo, a big hit in these countries in the early 2000s. Trotsky, played by the Australian actor Geoffrey Rush, is featured in a supporting role as Frida's revolutionary lover: 'a funny old fellow', according to the Ukrainian website, 'full of his own, perhaps crazy, ideas'. If that's an accurate report, Rush or his director seem to have got the character wrong. Trotsky was not a funny old fellow. He was a formidable and impressive figure, even in defeat and what he called old age. Not long after his 60th birthday, he wrote a last will and testament in which he reaffirmed his faith in 'the Communist future of mankind' as well as his confidence that future revolutionary generations would see through the 'stupid and vile slander of Stalin and his agents' and rehabilitate him. 'I will die a proletarian revolutionary, a Marxist, a dialectical materialist and, consequently, an irreconcilable atheist,' he wrote. And so, a few months later, he did.

[*] Faber, 476 pp., £20, November 2009, 978 0 571 23472.

Like a Thunderbolt

Sheila Fitzpatrick

- *Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn* by Liudmila Saraskina
  Molodaia gvardiia, 935 pp, €30.00, April 2008, ISBN 978 5 235 03102 9

  'Lives of Remarkable Men' was a series established by Maxim Gorky in the 1930s so that the Soviet Union might know its heroes. It's ironic that Liudmila Saraskina's deeply admiring biography of the David who challenged the Soviet Goliath should now appear under its imprint. As Saraskina tells the story, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, a Russian patriot and Orthodox Christian, was a man with a mission from the first. Unswerving, uncompromising, beset by perils and enemies, stoically enduring great ordeals, he set out to bring down the Soviet system. Like any prophet – like Lenin, to use an analogy more congenial to Solzhenitsyn than to Saraskina – he knew himself born to a historic destiny, suffering agonies of frustration when its accomplishment seemed impossible. In the end, his mission, like Lenin's, succeeded. In fact, one might say that it succeeded at Lenin's expense, a triumphant negation of Lenin's success.

  Back in 1984, Michael Scammell wrote a fine warts-and-all biography of Solzhenitsyn which was forced to end on a note of uncertainty. Had Solzhenitsyn blown his great international success of the 1970s by retreating into angry exile in Vermont to write a multi-volume epic of the Russian Revolution, *The Red Wheel*, which seemed likely to be a mammoth bore? Or would he somehow pull the rabbit out of the hat and end up as the Prophet Vindicated? Saraskina had no such problem with the conclusion of her biography (though it was written, of course, before Solzhenitsyn's death last month). In 1991, the Soviet Union collapsed; in 1994, Solzhenitsyn returned to Russia to an initially cool reception which by the end of the decade had transmuted into general acknowledgment of his heroic stature and achievement.

  Saraskina's reverential approach doesn't make for lively reading, especially as she puts in every biographical detail and painstakingly corrects every misstatement and canard – of which there are many, partly thanks to the KGB. Slogging through the first hundred pages of family history, I wondered if I had the stamina to get through 935 pages of small print. But after a while I warmed a little to her style. Never critical of Solzhenitsyn (this is her credo as a biographer, and she faults Scammell for not observing it), she nevertheless gives a fair account of the facts – give or take a bit of conspiracy theory, which is par for the course in a Russian biography – and can be relied on to summarise significant criticism by others before refuting it.

Most of all, though, I warmed to Solzhenitsyn. What a fighter! What an incorrigible conspirator, and how infectious the enjoyment he got out of it! (His exclamation marks are infectious, too.) What a sense of theatre and timing! How unshakeable in his belief that he was always right, regardless of the occasional 180° turn! What a subverter of other people's pieties (sometimes even his own)! How wickedly good at puncturing the self-regard of the intelligentsia! What a master of black humour!! What a polemical style!! In the great tradition of the arch-polemicists Marx and Lenin, but used for their undoing!!!

Solzhenitsyn was born in December 1918, a few months after his father died in a hunting accident. Like many other children in the Soviet Union in the 1920s, he had problems of social origin: a rich peasant grandfather and a father whose status as an officer in the wartime Imperial Army made him suspect. His mother, once a pampered daughter who (like his father) had gone to university, struggled to stay afloat. Not surprisingly, Sanya's best friends at school, Kirill Simonyan and Nikolai Vitkevich, were, like him, fatherless, poor, and of 'bad' social origins. They called themselves the Three Musketeers. Saraskina claims that, even as a child, Solzhenitsyn thought of the Revolution as a catastrophe for the country as well as for his family: 'Sanya understood *everything* – and that everything was purely dreadful, sinister.' But her own evidence suggests that he grew up with the usual dual value system of children who know that things are seen differently at home from the way they are seen at school. Critical of Stalin from early on, and sceptical about the show trials of the 'wrecker' engineers in the early 1930s (one of the accused was a family friend), the young Solzhenitsyn seems to have admired Lenin and identified with the Revolution. He was only ten when he read *War and Peace* and decided to write a similar saga of the Russian Revolution. The hero, it seems, was to be an idealistic Bolshevik who was also, in some sense, his lost father (whose political sympathies in 1917-18 are unclear).

By the time Solzhenitsyn entered the University of Rostov, a star student and one of eight holders of 'Stalin' stipends, he had resolved his childhood ambivalence – Saraskina sees this as a conversion – and with the single-mindedness that was to be characteristic of his adult life, become a thoroughgoing Soviet patriot. As he would write in *The Gulag Archipelago*, he was one of those 20-year-olds who saw themselves as children of the Revolution, fortune's favourites, with 'the brightest of futures ahead'. Although he had chosen to study physics and mathematics, his ambitions were already

focused on literature. ‘From childhood on,’ he wrote, ‘I had somehow known that my objective was the history of the Russian Revolution . . . To understand the Revolution I had long since required nothing beyond Marxism. I cut myself off from everything else that came up and turned my back on it.’ In his mid-twenties, he invoked this mission to persuade his new wife, Natalia Reshetovskaya, that having a child was not on the agenda: ‘Practically anyone is capable of producing a child and bringing it up,’ he wrote to her. ‘But to write a history of the post-October years as a work of art is something that perhaps I alone can do . . . You and almost everyone else think of the future in terms of your personal life and happiness. But the only terms in which I can think are: What can I do for Leninism?’

The letter to Natalia, written in 1945 from the front, where Solzhenitsyn was serving as an officer, is contemporary with the correspondence with his old schoolfriend and fellow Musketeer, Vitkevich, that was to bring Solzhenitsyn’s Soviet career and aspirations to a grinding halt. It is often said that his arrest was a random event, something that might have happened to any Soviet citizen, the result of a casually disrespectful reference to Stalin. The reality is stranger. Solzhenitsyn’s lengthy correspondence with Vitkevich (an officer in a different unit) was highly critical of Stalin and of what they saw as the degeneration of the Communist Party under his leadership. The main subject, discussed in a transparent code, was the need for a radical political renovation after the war that would involve the recruitment of other like-minded individuals. If this wasn’t provocation enough, Solzhenitsyn and Vitkevich had devised a code to inform each other of the locations of their respective units – which was, of course, a military secret.

Small wonder that when he was arrested early in 1945 he made no attempt to deny his guilt under Article 58-10 of the criminal code (counter-revolutionary agitation and propaganda), quibbling only as to the applicability of Article 58-11 (counter-revolutionary conspiracy) to a group of two. What did he think he was doing? There are many ways of explaining his behaviour: the feeling of invulnerability he attributes to the ‘children of the Revolution’; his own sense of mission and his ultra-patriotism (‘What can I do for Leninism?’); the risk-taking propensities of young officers in wartime and their assumption that the empty-headed girls censoring their letters simply wouldn’t notice that something had been written in code. He himself later said that the whole thing had ‘a childish character, although we were already officers at the

front'; and indeed small conspiracies engaged in by young people inspired by tales of the underground lives of the Bolsheviks before 1917, and now 'playing at Revolution' in the name of true Leninism, were not as rare in Stalin's time as an outsider might expect. But it's tempting to see this also as one of those moments of almost existential defiance of which there were to be several in Solzhenitsyn's life. When disaster struck in 1945, exhilaration was part of his reaction: 'something interesting, even alluring, was happening to me.'

He served an eight-year sentence in prison and Gulag, followed by three years in exile. The camps were the making of him. Labour camps were meant to be redemptive, according to idealistic early Soviet theory, and it could be argued that they proved so for Solzhenitsyn, if not in the way intended. He lost his Marxist-Leninist beliefs, regained the Orthodox faith of his childhood, and found his calling as the camps' chronicler and the Soviet system's denouncer.

From the beginning, he was fascinated by the variety of men and life stories he encountered in prison. Not long after his arrest he learned from other prisoners that the way to survive the camps was at all costs to avoid 'general work' (unskilled, manual, out in the open) and find a protected position indoors. He managed to use his knowledge of physics and mathematics to get himself transferred to a *sharashka*, one of those extraordinary prisons that were in effect closed scientific research institutes. The Marfino *sharashka*, where he spent almost three years working on secret telephone technology, probably saved his life. It provided him with comfortable living conditions, time for reading and writing and, above all, friends who were his intellectual equals. The passionate arguments he had with the Marxist (later dissident) Lev Kopelev ('Rubin') and the anti-Soviet Christian Dmitri Panin ('Sologdin') are vividly reproduced in *The First Circle*.

One might have expected him to do everything in his power to resist banishment from this 'semi-paradise', as Saraskina calls it. Yet when the transfer order came in 1950, he seems not to have resisted, even in a way to have welcomed it. Saraskina calls this 'the great enigma of his fate', but concludes that it was a principled choice and compares him to the German physicists who didn't want to work on the bomb – which seems a bit of a stretch. Scammell more plausibly saw the transfer as the result of over-confidence and miscalculation on Solzhenitsyn's part. Restlessness and risk-taking were surely part of it too, as they had been in 1945. Then there was the urge to learn

more about this nether world in whose 'first circle' he had lodged. His new place of education was Ekibastuz, a 'general work' camp in Kazakhstan, where he became a bricklayer.

The three years he spent in Ekibastuz gave him the material for *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, the only one of his Gulag works in which Solzhenitsyn himself is not the thinly veiled protagonist. Perhaps not coincidentally, this was one of the rare occasions when Solzhenitsyn seemed close to losing his sense of self and sinking into passivity. Towards the end of his sentence, he developed the tumour that was successfully treated in a hospital in Tashkent (as described in *Cancer Ward*) after his release into exile in February 1953. Despite the cancer and residual depression, his re-entry into civilian life was easier than that of many ex-prisoners. He became a schoolteacher in exile, apparently a good one, and continued in this profession after his release from exile in 1956, his remarriage to his first wife (Natalia had remarried while he was in Ekibastuz), and his move to Riazan, where she worked.

Though he had contacts among the intelligentsia of the capital, including his old Gulag friend Kopelev, he kept aloof from that milieu, preferring to stay in the provinces. He was still determined to write; and now he had his theme. Cautiously and secretly, keeping his day job, and building up an elaborate network of hiding places for his manuscripts, he started writing with the single-minded determination and self-discipline that were to characterise him from then on. *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, *The First Circle* and *Cancer Ward* were all written in the late 1950s, and it was at this point also that the idea of *The Gulag Archipelago*crystallised, though it was not written until the mid-1960s.

By the beginning of the 1960s, his work was circulating unofficially among the intelligentsia, but despite the Thaw initiated by Khrushchev at the 20th Party Congress in 1956, he hesitated to submit it for publication. The breakthrough came in the autumn of 1961, when Khrushchev renewed his attack on Stalin, and Aleksandr Tvardovsky, the editor of the reform-minded journal *Novy Mir*, called on writers to embrace the 'boldness, directness and truthfulness' which the 20th Party Congress had made possible. With Kopelev as intermediary, Solzhenitsyn sent the manuscript of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* to Tvardovsky, who managed to get Khrushchev's approval for its publication in *Novy Mir* in 1962. As the first unvarnished account of Gulag, a hitherto forbidden subject, it was a sensation. For a few years, Solzhenitsyn

was the toast of the Soviet literary world, fêted and courted by the intelligentsia, hailed by the media as the harbinger of a rebirth of Soviet literature, elected to the Union of Writers without formal application, introduced to Khrushchev, offered a Moscow apartment (he turned it down), nominated for a Lenin Prize.

Like Solzhenitsyn, *Novy Mir* had a mission; for some years, Tvardovsky believed, or at least hoped, the two missions were the same. *Novy Mir*'s was to tell the truth about the Stalinist past, but to do it from a Marxist and Communist standpoint, in the manner of a 'loyal opposition'. On principle, as well as for reasons of self-preservation, *Novy Mir* always repudiated any suggestion of agreement with critics who were hostile to the Soviet system, especially émigrés and non-Communist foreigners. In the era of the Thaw, the journal became a symbol of truth-telling, held in near veneration by much of the educated Soviet public.

Solzhenitsyn appeared at first to go along with the *Novy Mir* agenda, appreciative of the support and friendship that the warm-hearted Tvardovsky offered. He didn't really trust*Novy Mir*, however, or the intelligentsia (though he made a partial exception for Tvardovsky, on the grounds of his peasant roots): the only people he really trusted and felt at home with were fellow zeks – ex-prisoners. His priority was to get his work published at any cost – abroad, if need be. His mission, as gradually became evident, was not to reform the Soviet system but to indict it (to destroy it, he would later claim, though it's not clear that this was a fully formulated intention in the early 1960s).

While for many years *Novy Mir* cherished hopes of publishing *Cancer Ward*, and might conceivably have been able to publish *The First Circle* if the political stars had aligned themselves in the right way, it is hard to imagine any circumstances in which *The Gulag Archipelago*, which Solzhenitsyn was secretly writing throughout the 1960s, could have been published in the Soviet Union. Solzhenitsyn hid the manuscript's existence from Tvardovsky, though after the latter's death in 1971, he regretted not having let him look at it: Tvardovsky had 'grown up enough for that' by the end, as Solzhenitsyn condescendingly put it. On the eve of his deportation from the Soviet Union, he came out with the manifesto 'Live Not by Lies', which called on Soviet citizens to withdraw all co-operation with official lies, and, in effect, put *Novy Mir*'s truth-telling-within-limits in the same category as lying. *Novy Mir* was basically no different from other Soviet journals, he wrote a few years later, and with Tvardovsky's departure 'it died an unlovely death, without ever uncurling its spine.' To those who

considered this blasphemy, objecting 'that for many years *Novy Mir* was the window through which the Russian reading public saw the pure light of day', he responded coldly in*The Oak and the Calf*: 'Yes, it was. It was a window. But a warped window, crudely hacked in a rotten wall, and blocked not only by the censors' mesh but by an opaque screen of its own choosing – something like the opaque wire-glass in the Butyrki prison.'

Even as he let Tvardovsky go out on a limb for him, Solzhenitsyn was savouring the thought of the storm that *The Gulag Archipelago* was sure to provoke. In a conversation with his friend Veniamin Teush, taped by the KGB, he said: 'I'll unleash an entire avalanche . . . When the time comes, I'll fire a simultaneous and crushing salvo . . . *Archipelago* will murder them. It will be devastating!' *Guerre à l'outrance* with the Soviet regime was Solzhenitsyn's strategy from about 1967. Unmoved by the *Novy Mir* argument that dealing with the West meant lending one's support to the enemy (basically, he was on the enemy's side, though he didn't tell Tvardovsky that), he privately welcomed the unsanctioned foreign publication of chapters from *Cancer Ward* that devastated *Novy Mir*, and secretly sent *The Gulag Archipelago*abroad for safe-keeping and eventual publication. It had become clear to him that Western publicity was his best weapon – even back in the camps he had had the remarkably prescient idea that a Nobel Prize was the way to get his message out to the world – and he had also noticed that sensational confrontations were needed to keep the attention of the Western press. After Boris Pasternak was offered but forced to refuse the Nobel Prize in 1958, Solzhenitsyn became, on his own account, obsessed with it:

All the more vividly did I see it, all the more eagerly did I brood on it, demand it from the future! I had to have that prize! . . . And the earlier I got it, the firmer I should stand, the harder I should hit! My behaviour then would be the opposite in every way of Pasternak's. I should resolutely accept the prize, resolutely go to Stockholm, make a very resolute speech. Obviously the road back would be closed to me. But I would be able to publish everything! Tell all I knew! . . . Drag it all to the platform of the Nobel Prize ceremony and hurl it like a thunderbolt!

Solzhenitsyn got his Nobel Prize in 1970, though to his intense annoyance tangled domestic circumstances (his first son had just been born and he was in the midst of divorce and remarriage) prevented him going to Stockholm and hurling his

thunderbolt in person. By this time, tired of *Novy Mir*'s dance with authority, he was intent on forcing the Soviet regime to a confrontation; his motto as set out in *The Oak and the Calf* was: 'Don't just defend yourself, your own narrow little sector. Set out to shatter their whole system.' This had the disadvantage that the regime might arrest him or (more plausibly, in his estimation) send him into exile inside or outside the Soviet Union, but 'the lot of an outcast was not too high a price to pay. (And in any case, I could picture myself returning before many years were out.)' By now he had extensive, though necessarily covert, dealings with Western publishers (an interesting story well told in Scammell's biography, but more or less ignored by Saraskina) and a foreign currency income that was about to soar with the publication of *The Gulag Archipelago*.

In 1974, after long deliberation and internal argument, the Politburo decided to expel the troublemaker; this was also the year of Solzhenitsyn's definitive breakthrough to international superstardom with *The Gulag Archipelago*. Like his banishment from the *sharashka* in 1950, and perhaps also his arrest in 1945, Solzhenitsyn's expulsion from the Soviet Union was a catastrophe that he had in some sense sought. The event was traumatic, for all his long anticipation of it, partly because he had a new wife who didn't really want to emigrate and three small children he wanted to bring up as Russians. His first reaction on reaching freedom in the West was a stunned silence: here, finally, he had his chance to tell the whole truth to the sea of microphones in front of him, but suddenly it seemed pointless, 'unworthy . . . to speak there, where everyone speaks, where it's allowed'. It wasn't long before he was back on form, however, producing *The Oak and the Calf*, an over-the-top polemical masterpiece on the 'calf's' dealings with *Novy Mir* and the regime, and a remarkable short novel, *Lenin in Zurich*, dealing with the last year in Lenin's émigré life before the return on the sealed train after the revolution of February 1917.

Untypically, *Lenin in Zurich* was not autobiographical – at least not overtly so. Father Alexander Schmemann, an American Orthodox theologian who had recently befriended Solzhenitsyn, had noted something like 'Bolshevism turned inside out' in *The Oak and the Calf*, something 'cold' and 'cruel'; but *Lenin in Zurich* caused him even more alarm, for Schmemann had been told by Solzhenitsyn that he was the novel's Lenin, just as he was Vorotyntsev, the hero of his *Red Wheels* saga: 'It's a description *from inside* . . . a book written by "a twin" . . . The loneliness and "passion"

of Lenin. The loneliness and “passion” of Solzhenitsyn, struggle as the content – the only content! – of life. Ceaseless engagement with the enemy.’ Lenin, in Solzhenitsyn’s compelling representation, is a driven man, intensely frustrated by being stuck in Switzerland in 1916 when revolution might be imminent in Russia: ‘His vocation – he knew no other – was to change the course of history, and fulfilment had been denied him.’ A hard and disciplined worker, he demands total control over his domestic environment. An inveterate conspirator, his immediate problem is how to avoid being morally compromised as a recipient of foreign gold, while still accepting the German (enemy) help he needs to carry out his mission. Saraskina is distressed by the notion of a Lenin/Solzhenitsyn analogy and disputes it at some length (while also, perhaps inadvertently, providing some clues as to where Solzhenitsyn, whose best characters are usually drawn from life, might have got his Inessa). Even in her account, however, Solzhenitsyn’s relation to his subject in this book was unusual. Describing how he drafted*Lenin in Zurich* with Lenin’s photograph on a nearby table, Solzhenitsyn wrote: ‘He sees my idea – and cannot hinder it (or can he?). For him, torture beyond the grave – and for me, competition on earth.’

It’s hard not to see the Vermont years – between 1976 and 1994 – as a comedown after the great dramas of the 1960s and early 1970s, first on a Soviet and then on a world stage. Always a loner (or a ‘splitter’, as they said of Lenin), Solzhenitsyn had prickly relations with other dissidents and quarrelled with many of the Russian émigrés. In his Vermont retreat – a self-made Gulag, as some unkindly described it – he lived a hard-working and isolated life, marked by intense self-discipline and a household (complete with three sons, a stepson and a mother-in-law) tightly controlled for his convenience by his selfless second wife, Natalia (‘Alya’) Svetlova. His big writing project in these years was the epic of the Russian Revolution that he had conceived long ago: but now, instead of an idealist Communist as hero and authorial stand-in, the central protagonist, Georgyi Vorotyntsev, was an Imperial Army officer. Unfinished in terms of the original conception, *The Red Wheel* – published in many volumes in Russian but only partially available in English translation – started in August 1914 and reached April 1917, though a fragment of a projected October volume seems to have been published in Russian in 2007. Critically, the book has been a failure both in Russia and the West. It’s huge, a lot of it is boring, and even Saraskina doesn’t make big claims for it as a literary work, admiring instead – and justifiably – the stubborn determination

and sense of purpose, sustained (with appropriate adjustments) over seventy years, that kept him at it, regardless of what anybody thought.

Solzhenitsyn didn't like America. And, true to form, he told it so in his Harvard speech in 1978, when he indicted the West (specifically the United States) for its loss of civic courage and conscience, superficial and sensationalist press, decadence, mediocrity and misuse of liberty. The West was no model for Russia, he concluded, because for all its problems, Russia's suffering had brought a higher spiritual development to its population than anything the West could offer. This prompted outrage and accusations of ingratitude. Solzhenitsyn's running conflict with the American media intensified, focused now on his Russian nationalism and what was alleged to be a consequent tendency to anti-semitism; he found out by experience how potent this particular accusation is in American politics, and how hard to shake. (Saraskina oddly sees his problems in America as stemming from the US elite's hatred of Russia, and for Solzhenitsyn as its symbolic representative.) The attacks were hard on his wife and children, Solzhenitsyn wrote, because, by virtue of their everyday dealings with the outside world, America was for them a 'real' country in which they (unlike him) lived as 'real inhabitants'.

The Soviet Union's collapse paved the way for Solzhenitsyn's return in 1994, which he staged with typical élan and instinct for publicity, taking a train from Vladivostok and proceeding through the length of Russia to Moscow. There isn't a theatre director in the world who could have thought that one up, Saraskina comments (admiringly). It was intended as the return of the Prophet Vindicated, filmed in every detail by the BBC, but it didn't quite come off. Too late, many said; a great figure, but now irrelevant. Solzhenitsyn was equal to that, plunging again into one of his favourite roles, that of Jeremiah. The Russia he discovered in the mid-1990s was a moral sink, national consciousness and spiritual traditions lost, criminality rampant, party and Duma politics contemptible, the plight of the Russian people appalling and ignored by the new-rich rulers, privatisation a theft of public assets in broad daylight, Russia's 'liberal' intellectuals as posturing and out of touch as ever, the break-up of the empire and consequent loss of Russia's 'iconic regions, outlets to the sea, and millions of Russian people' a catastrophe, 'shock therapy' an outrage, even the Russian language corrupted. As for the free Russian press, they were a bunch of jackals, worse than the Cheka.

The jeremiad disconcerted the post-Soviet Russian elites, insofar as they paid attention, but by the late 2000s, Solzhenitsyn – visited, in a symbolic gesture, by Putin – seemed settled in the position of a prophet honoured (though not necessarily listened to) in his own country. He died a few months short of his 90th birthday: by special permission of the Patriarch, he was buried in the Donskoy cemetery in Moscow, along with the Dolgoruky princes, the White general Anton Denikin and the historian Vasily Klyuchevsky. A great writer, humanist and patriot, according to the Russian president, Dmitry Medvedev, though the Western press is more inclined to see him as the man who 'stood up against totalitarianism'. Western tributes, variations on the theme that Russia's loss is also the world's, were extensively quoted in the Russian media, but so were statements in the British press that Solzhenitsyn proved irrelevant to contemporary Russia.

The title of Saraskina's last chapter can be translated either as 'A Happy Man' or 'A Fortunate Man'. Fortunate he certainly was: even 'dying his own death', as the Russians say, was an achievement, not to mention blowing his horn before the walls of Jericho and (post if not propter hoc) having them come tumbling down. 'Happy' – even the kind of happiness Saraskina seems to have in mind, which was always feeling he had work to do – seems a bit demeaning for such a virtuoso of savage indignation. Would one call Swift happy? Or Lenin? Surely it was part of Solzhenitsyn's greatness never to be a mere seeker of happiness. Struggle was what he enjoyed; and victory, the routing of his enemies, was what he strove for. One might say that in 1991, with the Soviet enemy destroyed, he got what he wanted, or as near as is possible in any human life; but the same might be said of Lenin in 1917, and we know how that story ended. In any case, the contrarian Solzhenitsyn simply changed the direction of his fire. How much folly, corruption and idiotic self-satisfaction remained in post-Soviet Russia! What heedlessness and hedonism, what spiritual deadness! Solzhenitsyn was not one of those who mistook 1991 for the end of history.

Charmer

Sheila Fitzpatrick

- *Young Stalin* by Simon Sebag Montefiore
  Weidenfeld, 397 pp, £25.00, May 2007, ISBN 978 0 297 85068 7

Stalin was a ‘grey blur’ in the opinion of Nikolai Sukhanov, the Menshevik-Internationalist chronicler of the Russian Revolution. Trotsky thought him a faceless ‘creature of the bureaucracy’, even in power. These must be among the most misleading descriptions ever to capture the fancy of generations of historians. There was one notable exception among the scholars: Robert Tucker put a dashing young revolutionary – someone who might have stepped out of the Baader-Meinhof Group or the Weathermen – on the cover of *Stalin as Revolutionary* (1973). But the ‘grey blur’ remained, no doubt partly in reaction against devotional Soviet characterisations of the Great Leader, Teacher and Father of Peoples. Scholars who had to wade through the turgid prose of his theoretical writings concluded that Stalin was poorly educated and probably not too bright, except as a backroom organiser. As for physical attributes, his short stature, pockmarked face and damaged arm were frequently noted. The consensus was that in the line-up of totalitarian dictators, Hitler was the one with charisma.

This started to change around the time of the fall of the Soviet Union and the opening of its archives. In his 1988 biography, *Stalin: Triumph and Tragedy*, the first to be based on archival research, Dmitri Volkogonov presented both a real person, capable of emotional reactions and contradictions, and, more surprisingly, a real intellectual who remained a serious, wide-ranging reader all his life. Later biographies followed this up; the theme of high intelligence and intellectual achievement was particularly prominent in Robert Service’s biography of 2004. The first volume of Simon Sebag Montefiore’s biography, *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar* (2004), dealing with his life and milieu in power, granted him a certain charisma and even had a chapter headed ‘The Charmer’. Still, it was not the charm but the ‘deadly whirlpools of ambition, anger and unhappiness’ that were most evident.

Montefiore’s new book on the young Stalin seems to want us to think in terms of a whole new level of charm and charisma, the charm ‘feline’ and occasionally ‘leonine’, powerfully felt by men and women, the yellow/honey-brown eyes often described as ‘burning’. This new Stalin has physical grace (despite the limp and the webbed feet) and a ‘detached magnetism’. He is a Caucasian, exotic and mysterious, as a man of secrets should be; a romantic poet of some achievement; a natural actor, who could win anybody over when he was in the mood. A man of affairs in all senses (women throng the pages of *Young Stalin*), this Stalin is a dangerous man with connections to

the criminal world that added to his glamour in the eyes of well-born revolutionary intellectuals like Lenin and Krasin. 'The underground was his natural habitat, through which he moved with elusively feline grace – and menace.'

The new preoccupations of *Young Stalin* have to do with Stalin as a man of the Caucasus (and, more specifically, a Caucasian gangster), his early promise as a Georgian poet, and his activities as a lover. As far as the Caucasus is concerned, the message is that this was non-Europe, the Russian imperial frontier. We get a vivid picture of Gori, Stalin's birthplace near the mountains and the turbulent Kura river, 'a liberated and violent place dominated by drinking, prayer and brawling', half Georgian and half Armenian in population, with the obligatory Russian garrison. The Djugashvili family in the 1870s fits this picture. Beso, the cobbler who was (probably) Stalin's father, did the drinking, the schoolboy Stalin the brawling, and his lively mother, Keke, benefited from the liberation: when Beso became a drunkard and failed to support her and her only surviving son, Joseph (Soso), she found an array of patrons and protectors in Gori's small society (a priest, Father Charkviani, with whom she and Soso lived for a time; a merchant; the local police officer), provoking some whispering but apparently no real loss of reputation.

Tiflis, where Stalin moved at 15, is evoked in the tradition of British Orientalism ('Water-carriers, street-traders, pickpockets and porters delivered to or stole from the Armenian and Persian bazaars, the alleyways of which more resembled a Levantine souk than a European city. Caravans of camels and donkeys, loaded with silks and spices from Persia and Turkestan, fruit and wineskins from the lush Georgian countryside, ambled through the gates of the Caravanserai'). But for Stalin, Tiflis meant a stern seminary education and, running parallel to this, his induction, first into the world of literature forbidden by the seminary, from Zola and Victor Hugo to Tolstoy and Saltykov-Shchedrin, and then into the world of revolution.

While Stalin was still a seminarian (he dropped out at the age of 20), and before he became known as a revolutionary, he made something of a reputation as a poet, writing under the name of Soselo. Five of his poems were published by one of Georgia's leading poets, the romantic nationalist Prince Ilya Chavchavadze, who later remembered Soselo as 'the young man with the burning eyes'. These poems, in which moons, mountains and harps abound, were to become 'minor Georgian classics' and provide evidence that the 17-year-old Stalin had, however transiently, imbibed a healthy dose

of Georgian romantic nationalism. Montefiore prints one poem at the beginning of each of the five sections of his book.

On a personal level, Stalin was anything but romantic. After his first wife's death in 1907, and particularly in his years of Siberian exile during the First World War, he turns out to have had many lovers – fellow revolutionaries, wives of fellow revolutionaries, landladies – but the relationships broke up without difficulty when he moved, and he rarely kept in touch, even when children were born. Women are a new topic in Stalin biography, thanks to the post-Soviet flood of sensational (but evidently factual) revelations in the Russian press, and it's interesting to find that the long-standing rumours about an unacknowledged illegitimate son are true, twice over (both sons, Aleksandr Pereprygin and Constantine Kuzakov, were fathered on Russian women during his Siberian exile; Stalin's affair with Lydia Pereprygina, started in 1914 when she was only 13, caused a scandal among the revolutionaries and trouble with her brothers and the local police). Rather surprisingly, the list of mistresses – around fifteen – included a couple of Bolshevik women from the Russian intelligentsia, one of whom (Ludmilla Stal) may have inspired his pseudonym.

Fifteen affairs in two decades of mainly unmarried life in a free-living revolutionary milieu hardly qualifies Stalin as a womaniser, and Montefiore admits as much, noting that 'women ranked low on his list of priorities, far below revolution, egotism, intellectual pursuits and hard-drinking dinners with male friends.' Yet the space Montefiore gives to the affairs implicitly contradicts this.

The most substantial of his new themes concerns the impact on Stalin of the Caucasian revolutionary underground. *Young Stalin* begins with the story of the great Tiflis bank robbery of 1907, carried out on behalf of the revolution by the notorious Kamo (another Gori boy, of Armenian rather than Georgian descent), which Montefiore claims to have been masterminded by Stalin. This sets the scene for a portrayal of Stalin the gangster, formed in 'that peculiar milieu where violence, fanaticism and loyalty were the main coinage'; a 'pitiless cut-throat' (though he 'left what he called the "black work" – the killing – to his henchmen'), the creator of a 'Bolshevik bank-robbery and assassination outfit which he controlled from afar like a Mafia don'.

Perhaps Stalin did mastermind the Tiflis robbery, but the main evidence seems to come from later memoirs by his sister-in-law, Sashiko Svanidze, who merely repeats what Stalin told her. Perhaps Stalin really was an intimate of criminals in Tiflis, but the

only ‘gangster’ associates identified here are revolutionaries, not career criminals. Perhaps the killing of stool-pigeons in the Caucasus revolutionary movement was as common as Montefiore implies, but if so, he needs to give some examples. He has clearly been impressed by the Azerbaijani template of clan violence and killing recently put forward by the German scholar Jörg Baberowski, but it’s something of a jump to extend this to Georgians and Armenians. Of course, it is too much to expect Montefiore to have become an expert on the Caucasus for the purpose of this book, and the significance of the Caucasus background may become clearer when Ronald Suny’s study of the young Stalin as a Georgian appears.

This is an exuberant book, even in its discussion of sources. It’s clear that Montefiore had fun visiting sites, and interviewing surviving witnesses or (more often) their children. There’s a tremendous amount of archival and other research in the book, much of it presumably done by the Russian and Georgian scholars whose help Montefiore acknowledges, but he was the one who had to make sense of it all. It’s not a scholar’s book in the academic sense: Montefiore doesn’t have to ‘locate’ himself in the historiography (which has its advantages as well as its drawbacks), but he is under an obligation to tell a good story. Still, he is generous to academics in his note on sources: ‘masterly’, ‘magnificent’ and ‘magisterial’ are among his adjectives for a broad and disparate assembly of scholars, from Robert Tucker, Ronald Suny and Alexander Rabinowitch to Richard Pipes and Robert Conquest. His reading in secondary sources is broad, and includes some Russian and German.

It’s a lesser work in every sense than *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar*, which came out first though it deals with a later period. *The Court of the Red Tsar* was a hard act to follow not only because of its popular success but because it was an eye-opener to scholars as well: it was the first biography to use the newly accessible Stalin archive to present Stalin among his circle – his family, friends and political associates. The absence of a milieu, or even a minimal sense of how he operated within the Politburo (Montefiore’s ‘court’), had been a glaring defect in earlier biographies. It would be hard to bring off such a feat twice, so it’s not surprising Montefiore hasn’t quite managed it. One of the striking things in *The Court of the Red Tsar* was his ability to process huge amounts of data and draw sensible conclusions. To be sure, there was a bit of overwriting, notably in the reiteration of a few colourful words – ‘killing’ and ‘paranoid’ among them – but the book was remarkably less sensational than might have been

expected. In *Young Stalin*, Montefiore is not so sensible and does tend to inflate his material, which makes the occasional misdating and misunderstanding of Russian words more noticeable. Often, in the service of a good story, he goes further than his evidence warrants.

It's interesting to return to the earlier book in the light of this new work on the Red Tsar in the making. The youthful affairs make Stalin more human but also throw into relief the personal isolation of his later years (he had no publicly acknowledged woman companion after his second wife Nadya's suicide in 1932, though his devoted housekeeper, Valentina Istomina, may have filled this role in private). The Georgian nationalism of the young poet obviously didn't last; indeed, for all his closeness to diasporic Georgians in Russia, Stalin as an adult showed little eagerness even to visit his mother, let alone revisit the scenes of his childhood. If he developed any nostalgia in his old age, it was for the Orthodox Church, or perhaps for Father Charkviani, the priest who helped him get into the Gori church school and the Tiflis seminary and served as a surrogate father. In the 1940s, Stalin had some extraordinary conversations with Alexander Vasilevsky, the army chief of staff and son of a Russian priest whom, for career reasons, he had had to renounce. According to Vasilevsky's account, Stalin kept asking about his father, urging him not to neglect the old man, and finally, in a remarkable touch, disclosed that for the past few years he, Stalin, had been quietly sending Vasilevsky's father money.

Both books, then, are studies of milieus: of the Caucasian revolutionary underground, with Tiflis and Baku as its centres; and of Stalin's post-revolutionary 'court', centred in the Kremlin and dacha settlements around Moscow. The differences in geographical and social location are obvious, but there were also important continuities and connections. In the first place, Stalin's social circle in Moscow after the Revolution (which included much of his political circle) was predominantly Caucasian, if you include Caucasus-dwelling Russians like his Alliluyev in-laws along with the Georgian Svanidzes and Ordzhonikidzes and the Armenian Mikoyans. Montefiore's term for Stalin's political associates is 'magnates', a rather misleading word, given that these Politburo members and Central Committee apparatchiki were not possessed of great estates, wealth or regional power. Of varying social backgrounds, they had in common that they were all former revolutionaries, often active in the Caucasus, who with the success of the Revolution had made it into the big time. Stalin clearly remained socially

part of a Caucasian diaspora, at least until the Great Purges: whether this means that he retained the Caucasian kin-based 'honour and loyalty culture' that Montefiore ascribes to him is more doubtful. Surely such a culture would have led him to try to protect his own family (the Svanidzes and the Alliluyevs) in the Purges, as Ordzhonikidze tried unavailingly to protect his. But for Stalin, on the contrary, not protecting his own when he had the power to do so seems to have been part of a private code of honour derived not from the Caucasus but from the revolutionary movement. He followed the same code when he refused to bargain with the Germans after his son Yakov, an artillery officer, was captured during the Second World War.

Montefiore doesn't give us much about the transition from the young man who identified with Georgia to the older one who apparently identified strongly with Russia (the main theme of Robert Tucker's biography), other than to remark that Stalin's later Siberian exile 'made him more of a Russian. Perhaps Siberia froze some of the Georgian exoticism out of him.' Perhaps it did, but Montefiore is so interested in the Oriental exoticism of the Caucasus that he doesn't notice the significance of its status as a part of the Russian Empire; ambitious young men from the periphery, including ambitious young revolutionaries like Stalin, were always likely to move to the bigger pond.

Neither anti-semitic nor having much acquaintance with Jews in his youth, Stalin became a raging anti-semite in his old age; and Montefiore suggests that when he set out to Russianise himself (first as a member of the broader revolutionary movement from 1907, when he attended the London conference, and later as an exile in Siberia), a fairly casual anti-semitism was part of the package. Montefiore also thinks it relevant that the branch of Russian social democracy Stalin embraced in 1907 was the 'Russian faction' – Lenin's Bolsheviks – rather than the 'Jewish' Mensheviks. However, as Stalin was also an opponent of the Mensheviks who dominated social democracy in Georgia, the Jewishness of the Menshevik faction in Russia was probably not the crucial determinant of his attitude. In *The Court of the Red Tsar*, Montefiore made the same point about Stalin's anti-semitism being 'more a Russian mannerism than a dangerous obsession', noting also that in the 1920s and 1930s he was much more notably Polonophobic than anti-semitic, and that he protected his Jewish colleague Kaganovich from anti-semitic jokes. The outright anti-semitism of Stalin's last years he attributes (correctly, in my opinion) to his sense of the threat posed by the creation in

1948 of the state of Israel, which, as quickly became evident, was being drawn into the American camp in the Cold War, and the feeling was only exacerbated when he saw how enthusiastically supposedly assimilated Soviet Jews welcomed the new Jewish homeland, and welcomed Golda Meir when she arrived in Moscow as the first Israeli ambassador to the Soviet Union.

An issue from *The Court of the Red Tsar* on which *Young Stalin* is particularly illuminating is the rampant paranoia of the Great Purges. That the roots of the Soviet obsession with conspiracy are to be found in the pre-revolutionary underground is a truism. What Montefiore does is to make a more precise connection with the impact on the early 20th-century revolutionary movement of the *zubatovshchina*. In 1902, Zubatov, chief of the Moscow department of the tsarist secret police, the Okhrana, introduced a new policy according to which, in Montefiore's words, 'double agents not only penetrated the "internal life of the revolutionary organisations" but also sometimes directed them. The Okhrana even set up their own revolutionary groups and trade unions. And their very existence was designed to inspire a cannibalistic frenzy of suspicion and paranoia among the revolutionaries.' As indeed it did. The discovery that the Bolshevik revolutionary Roman Malinovsky, whom both Lenin and Stalin had trusted, was a police spy is only one of many such instances in the world of the revolutionary underground, where accusation and counter-accusation of betrayal were rife. Stalin, who was head of the Party's intelligence and counter-intelligence in Baku and prided himself on his ability to sniff out spies, was in the thick of all this (indeed, in 1902 and again in 1909, he himself was accused of being a police spy, though Montefiore – following the work of the Russian researcher Aleksandr Ostrovsky – acquits him). In Montefiore's words, 'Stalin orchestrated a cannibalistic inquisition in Baku to find traitors, real and imagined, just as he would across the entire USSR in the 1930s. The difference is that in Baku the Party really was infested with police spies.' That is not only a significant difference but also an important clue as to how Stalin – and for that matter all the other Bolsheviks who were surprisingly sympathetic to the premise that purging was necessary – could have found it plausible that the Soviet Union in the late 1930s, like the revolutionary underground in the 1900s, was riddled with spies. If the clumsy old Okhrana could do it, why not the much more sophisticated Western intelligence agencies of the 1930s?

The nature of the relationship between Stalin and Lenin is a preoccupation of all historians of the Soviet Union. In Montefiore's version of the story, Lenin welcomes the advent of Stalin, his 'wonderful Georgian', mainly because of his connection with the 'expropriations' (that is, the bank robberies and other illegal money-making activities in the Caucasus) and hence with the health of the Bolshevik Party treasury in the hard years after 1905. Others have argued that Stalin's expertise on questions of nationality was a large part of the appeal; on Lenin's urging, he made his debut as a Party theorist by writing 'Marxism and the National Question' in 1913, but Montefiore relegates this to footnotes. In line with the general thrust of the argument of *Young Stalin*, he wants Lenin to respond to Stalin not as an intellectual but as a Caucasian 'gangster', rather like Kamo.

Socially, Lenin and Stalin were very different, Lenin a Russian noble as well as an intellectual, long resident in Europe and conversant with foreign languages. Whether they were alike politically is harder to judge, because the theoretical differences that preoccupied the émigré revolutionaries have been almost entirely expunged from Montefiore's narrative. On the old question of whether Stalin, once in power, was Lenin's true disciple or a betrayer of his revolution, one might at first conclude that Montefiore is on the side of betrayal: if Stalinism was a product of 'the violent rites of Stalin's secret planet of Caucasian conspiracy', it would seem as if Lenin and Leninism didn't have a lot to do with it. But then again, 'when Lenin seized power and, beleaguered on all sides, ran his government like a conspiratorial camarilla, Stalin was . . . in his element'; so perhaps they did have a lot in common after all. Moreover, Montefiore tells us that Lenin's vision of proletarian dictatorship was a necessary prerequisite for Stalin's dictatorship, which seems to beg more questions than it answers. Montefiore's bottom line is that, once in power, Lenin's Party developed 'the taste for extreme bloody solutions to all challenges', and Stalin was 'the patron of these brutal tendencies' – meaning that he encouraged them in others? – and also 'their personification'.

Stalin's relationship with the Party's émigré intellectuals, excluding Lenin, was often rocky. They tended to underestimate him, and he regarded them as 'pretty but useless' (an early characterisation of Trotsky, whom he also described as a 'noisy phoney champion with fake muscles'). It was not, as has erroneously been thought, that he was significantly less well educated than these members of the Russian intelligentsia, many

of them Jewish or from the Russian nobility, but rather that he felt socially ill at ease and was inclined to behave truculently in their presence. In Siberia, he annoyed his fellow revolutionary exiles (Montefiore identifies them as 'Jewish', as many were, but they were also and more importantly intellectuals) by consorting too much with 'criminals' among the exiled population ('there were some salt of the earth fellows among them and too many rats among the politicals'). Stalin's inferiority complex surely had something to do with foreign languages: he struggled all his life to master English and German (the seminary taught only Latin and Greek, in addition to Russian, the language of instruction), while many of the others had learned these languages in the gymnasium (the Russian academic high school) or when in exile.

The pre-Revolutionary Bolshevik Party has been analysed in terms of various dichotomies. The dichotomy of intellectuals and workers (the one I have just been using) is probably the most popular. Another is émigrés, arguing about revolutionary theory in the cafés of Europe, and underground revolutionaries in Russia, known respectively as committee men (*komitetchiki*) and practicals (*praktiki*). Lenin and Trotsky were in the first category, Stalin in the second. These dichotomies are useful for understanding the pre-Revolutionary and early Soviet situation. But one inference that could be drawn from the two Montefiore books is that the dichotomy of Jews and Caucasians, and their respective patronage networks, may have been equally important, at least after Lenin's death. The gradual exclusion of the 'Jewish' group within the Bolshevik leadership, following the defeat of Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev in the struggles after Lenin's death, has often been noted: it is less often remarked that, with Stalin's ascent to power, it was the Caucasians who won. Contemporaries noticed this, however: the anonymous hate mail received by official Soviet bodies in the 1920s and 1930s, includes complaints that Russia was being run *both* by the Jews and the Caucasians (led by their 'Caucasian Prince').

Two groups whose importance Montefiore underrates are Russians and workers. The former have walk-on parts; the latter go almost unmentioned. Despite the occasional passing reference to strikes in *Young Stalin*, you could read the whole book without knowing that stirring up workers in factories and oilfields (in the Caucasus, these workers included many ethnic Russians as well as Caucasians) was the main aim of the revolutionary movement and its activists. Marxist theory identified the industrial proletariat as the revolutionary class. But you would scarcely know this from

Montefiore's account, which dismisses Lenin's 'dictatorship of the proletariat' with a passing, if remarkable, one-word characterisation, 'homicidal', and leaves the impression that the Revolution was carried out by a handful of repentant Russian noblemen, Jewish intellectuals and exotic Georgian 'gangsters'.

It's true that Montefiore is writing a biography of Stalin, not a history of the Revolution. But Stalin was a Marxist, and the issue of the workers mattered to him. Agitation among the workforce and organisation of the workers are hardly mentioned in *Young Stalin* but the lacuna is even more significant in *The Court of the Red Tsar*. Workers were not just supporters of the Revolution: they were also party activists who after the Revolution became full-time 'cadres' – administrators and managers in the new Soviet state. This meant that they mattered politically as well as intellectually to Stalin: the allegiance of the 'proletarian' element in the Bolshevik Party (meaning primarily cadres who had been workers, soldiers and peasants in 1917) was crucial in the leadership struggle of the 1920s, and Stalin – clearly urban lower-class, though, as the son of an artisan cobbler, not strictly proletarian – was the man who won it. In the post-Revolutionary context, Stalin's social inferiority to the Party intellectuals was a trump card that he knew how to play. Indeed, he even managed to turn the dying Lenin's criticism of him as 'crude' (in connection with an instance of rudeness to Lenin's wife) into a political advantage. A few years later, he launched a massive campaign of proletarian 'affirmative action' (*vydvizhenie*) that sent tens of thousands of young workers to higher education and promoted even larger numbers directly into management, thus simultaneously creating a new 'worker and peasant intelligentsia', Russifying the new Soviet elite (workers, even in the non-Russian parts of the Soviet Union, were still likely to be Russian at this point) and earning the beneficiaries' lasting gratitude.

There are occasional echoes of all this in *The Court of the Red Tsar*, but they are so fragmentary as to be incomprehensible. From time to time, Stalin worries that there are not enough workers in the Party leadership, but it is not clear why this should bother him. He has similar worries about Russians, and these Montefiore understands better, as he can see that keeping the Russians happy was important in a state that, however revolutionary, was the successor to the Russian Empire. The relative invisibility of workers and Russians can be explained partly in terms of Montefiore's focus on the very top of the Soviet political hierarchy ('the court', meaning the

Politburo and others with direct access to Stalin), where both groups were much less well represented in the prewar period than at the next level down (ministers and deputy ministers, regional party secretaries and so on). But even at court, Russians are overshadowed in Montefiore's account by the colourful Caucasians. There's Molotov, Stalin's right-hand man, but Montefiore finds him as boring as the 'bug-eyed' Nadezhda Krupskaya, Lenin's (Russian) widow; there's Bukharin, but he's a loser; there's Andreev, a working-class Russian, but he's uninteresting; there's Ezhov, another working-class Russian, who is interesting, but mainly as a miniature murderer; and finally there's Khrushchev, a Russian worker from the Ukraine who has gone down in history, perhaps because of his choice of shirts, as a Ukrainian peasant. Montefiore isn't wrong to stress the prominence of the Caucasian diaspora in *The Court of the Red Tsar*. But we need to keep the other elements in mind too, if only to appreciate the magnitude of Stalin's achievement in winning the Bolshevik 'proletarian' vote in the 1920s without being proletarian and, in the Second World War, successfully identifying with the cause of Holy Russia without being a Russian. Not bad for a Georgian boy, a failed priest, from faraway Gori.

A Little Swine

Sheila Fitzpatrick

- *Comrade Pavlik: The Rise and Fall of a Soviet Boy Hero* by Catriona Kelly
  Granta, 352 pp, £17.99, May 2005, ISBN 1 86207 747 9

'Report any suspicious persons,' the message flashing above the New Jersey turnpike said as I drove south towards Washington a few months after 9/11. I did not respond to the call, but it reminded me of someone who did: Pavlik Morozov, the heroic young Soviet denouncer of the early 1930s whose legend is the subject of Catriona Kelly's new book. Unfortunately in Pavlik's case the suspicious person he dobbed in was his own father, and angry relatives took revenge by murdering him. Pavlik won a lasting place in Soviet martyrology as the boy who was brave enough to put loyalty to the state above loyalty to family. Then, in the twilight of the Soviet regime in the 1970s and 1980s, he became the anti-hero of the Russian intelligentsia's counter-myth, which presented him as a cowardly betrayer and a dupe. The real-life Pavlik story is, of course, more complicated; and Kelly has set herself the task of straightening it all out, which

includes correcting an earlier revisionist effort, Yury Druzhnikov's *Denouncer No. 001* (1995).[*]

Denunciation – the act by which one citizen tells the authorities about wrongdoing on the part of another citizen, implicitly or explicitly calling for his punishment – has always been a touchy subject. In the first place, there is the inevitable uneasiness about motive: is the denouncer the patriot that he claims to be, or is he acting out of self-interest and a wish to settle personal scores? The rhetoric of civic virtue with which governments (and schools, prisons and other closed institutions) surround denunciation coexists with a subaltern counter-discourse in which denunciation is an act of betrayal. Our assessment of acts of denunciation is highly sensitive to context and angle of vision: if I do it, it's public-spirited; if you do it (especially if you do it to me), it's contemptible. Ambivalence about denunciation has produced parallel lexicons in many languages: the French have the classic dichotomy of*dénonciation* (the good kind of denunciation) and *délation* (the bad); the Russians have the pejorative *donos/donoschik* to set against various official euphemisms; Americans admire*whistleblowers* but disdain *squealers*, distinguishing the patriotic act of *providing tips* from the sordid habit of *snitching*.

Practices of denunciation have a long pedigree. States have sometimes offered financial rewards: the Roman Empire is one example, Restoration England another. Or the state may proclaim a duty to denounce and punish citizens who fail to honour it: Muscovite Russia comes immediately to mind, but the Napoleonic Penal Code made similar provision. During the Spanish Inquisition, as Henry Kamen writes, 'there was no need to rely on a secret police system, because the population as a whole was encouraged to recognise the enemy within the gates.' The tradition of denunciation as civic virtue was reinvented in the French Revolution, when the revolutionaries' passion for transparency led them to advocate *dénonciation* and the rooting out of corruption as a high revolutionary duty. In the words of a speaker at Marat's funeral in 1793, 'Denunciation is the mother of virtues just as vigilance is the surest safeguard of the people and of liberty.' In mid-20th-century America, the pro-denunciation case was put by Elia Kazan (who had recently named names before the House Un-American Activities Committee) in *On the Waterfront* (1954), starring Marlon Brando as a longshoreman who risks his life by breaking ranks and denouncing the mob; while the counter-view of denunciation as betrayal was presented in Arthur Miller's *A View from*

the Bridge (1955), the story of a docker who turns in his wife's cousins as illegal immigrants.

If occasional denunciation is part of the everyday life of all societies, there are times when it runs riot, as it did in the Soviet Union during the Purges of the late 1930s, and in France under German occupation in World War Two (as well as after the Liberation). Mass denunciation is also precipitated by moral panics, as it was during the Salem witch-hunts, or at the time of the anti-Communist hysteria in the US in the 1950s, or, more recently, in the extraordinary outburst of public anxiety about child abuse in the 1980s and early 1990s that produced thousands of accusations, most of which turned out to be baseless, against kindergarten teachers and day-care workers.

Liberals, who generally abhor denunciation, often see it as a phenomenon peculiarly characteristic of totalitarian states, whose regimes encourage it as a method of social control. While it's not clear to me that the historical record bears this out, there is no doubt that denunciation flourished in Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union, and the postwar Soviet-style regimes in Eastern Europe. The sociologist Jan Gross developed the ingenious theory that denunciations constituted a form of 'privatisation' of the totalitarian state, since they enabled individuals to draw on the state's coercive power to settle private grievances. When we think of denunciation in a totalitarian context, we think of secret police, of ideologies exalting loyalty to the state or party, of zero tolerance of dissent, and the possibility of appalling outcomes – death or concentration camp – for those denounced. Such states also tend to stigmatise certain groups (kulaks, Jews) as ipso facto disloyal, without regard for the actual attitudes or behaviour of a particular individual. This makes denunciation all the easier, a mere act of labelling, while at the same time rendering it virtually impossible for the victim to prove his innocence.

The Romans, as Kelly reminds us, had a legend that placed loyalty to the state above loyalty to family: Livy's story of Brutus the Elder, 'who condemned his own sons to death for treachery to the Republic'. Notwithstanding this (and the biblical story of Abraham and Isaac, which shows family loyalty being trumped in the service of God) denunciation of family members has often earned special opprobrium. In Western commentary on the Pavlik Morozov story, Pavlik's denunciation is seen as infamous because its target was his father, implying an unnatural repudiation of family loyalty. In the real-life Soviet Union of the 1930s, however, 'family' denunciations, though not

unknown, seem to have been comparatively rare. This was no doubt largely because of the dangers they posed: at peak periods for denunciations, to denounce a family member as an 'enemy of the people' put the entire family at risk of the Gulag or death.

There were many different forms of denunciation in the Soviet Union, their variety no doubt a testimony to the relative poverty of alternative forms of individual agency and legal redress. 'Loyalty' denunciations were one genre, practised particularly by Communists in the Stalin period who either genuinely suspected one another of heresy or noticed that labelling someone an 'enemy of the people' was a good way of getting rid of them. Even more prevalent were the 'whistle-blowing' denunciations (first identified as such in Nicholas Lampert's *Whistle-Blowing in the Soviet Union*, 1985), in which ordinary citizens (usually not Communists) denounced their (usually Communist) bosses for abuses of power – embezzling, bullying of subordinates, nepotism or bribe-taking. In its Soviet guise, 'whistle-blowing' was a quintessential 'weapon of the weak', in James C. Scott's phrase, whose purpose was to get the offending persons removed from office. As with whistle-blowing all over the world, the Soviet practice involved risk: if you wrote to higher authorities about your local boss, and the higher authorities sent your complaint back down to the local level, you might well be the one to suffer, rather than your boss.

Pavlik's legendary denunciation had a whistle-blowing component but seems closer in genre to the patriotic denunciation, though it seems pointless to try to classify a denunciation of which no original text survives – according to Kelly, none may ever have existed. Her remarkably thorough research, far surpassing even Druzhnikov's (which for its time was impressive), encompassed the central archives of the Russian security police (a real coup); archives in Ekaterinburg (formerly Sverdlovsk), the provincial capital of the Urals; the files of Tavda district's local newspaper; and even oral history in the remote village of Gerasimovka, where Pavlik lived and died. The result is a wholesale deconstruction of the myth. The reader may feel a tinge of disappointment that no 'true story' is offered as a replacement, and even fleetingly wonder if this is a deliberate postmodern effect – no 'true' stories, only different versions – but Kelly, I'm sure, is enough of a natural puzzle-solver to have given us a 'true' story if her materials had supported one. As it is, the fascination of the chase outweighs any disappointment about the outcome. It is sobering – sometimes almost comic – to see the sloppiness and failures of logic of the 1930s Soviet documentation

nakedly revealed under such a formidable analytic gaze. Those half-educated Tavda officials, with all their confusions, mendacities, grammatical mistakes and self-interested evasions, are no match for Catriona Kelly.

The Soviet myth of Pavlik Morozov has no single, canonical version; indeed, its evolution over time is an important part of the story Kelly sets out to tell. It is nonetheless possible to give a rough paraphrase of the official version, as established by early investigative journalism and the original trial of Pavlik's alleged murderers. It runs as follows: Pavlik, born in 1918 of peasant parents in a poor village near the border between the Urals and Siberia, denounced his father, Trofim Morozov, chairman of the village soviet, for selling identity documents to kulak deportees who had been settled in the neighbourhood. The motive for the denunciation was patriotism: Pavlik was a Young Pioneer, or junior Communist. He was murdered by members of his own family, the Morozov clan, whose patriarch (Pavlik's grandfather) was the big man in the village and therefore close in spirit to a kulak. Thus the murder was not only an act of revenge for family betrayal but also an episode in the 'class war' between kulaks and the proletarian Soviet state in the wake of collectivisation. Pavlik's denunciation was an act of bravery and he died a martyr.

In Druzhnikov's 1995 version, it was all quite different. In Kelly's view, Druzhnikov's story, which won great acclaim among post-Soviet intellectuals, was 'as much a product of myth-making as the official legends about the boy', flawed by its assumption – common among the Russian intelligentsia in late Soviet times – that the truth had to be not just different from the official version, but its opposite. Druzhnikov's Pavlik was not a Pioneer – there were no Pioneers in this backward, depressed village – or a Soviet patriot or any kind of exemplar; he was the poor son, widely disliked and despised in the village, of a peasant mother (Tatiana) whose husband, Trofim, had left her for another woman. Even the name 'Pavlik' (one of several possible diminutives of Pavel) was false: the actual Pavel Morozov was called Pasha or Pashka by his family and schoolmates. Pavlik (we will keep the false name so as not to confuse the story even further) denounced his father as part of a feud between his parents, compounded by his own resentment at inheriting, as eldest son, the chores of the man of the house. He was then killed not by members of his father's family, but by the OGPU, who wanted to set up a show trial of kulaks in Tavda and saw the Morozovs as the best

candidates. Thus there was no virtue involved in this squalid case, no patriotism, and the murder was instigated by the Soviet state, not its enemies.

In Kelly's version, based on close scrutiny of court and other documents, practically all certainties evaporate. Pavlik existed (though she agrees with Druzhnikov that he was not called Pavlik), and was probably murdered in the forest (unless an animal killed him). There is no reason to think he was murdered by the OGPU rather than a villager, but which villager(s) did the deed is unclear. While he was not formally a Pioneer, since there was no Pioneer organisation in the village, he may have thought of himself as one in spirit. He may or may not have denounced his father; and his father, while certainly absent from the village, may or may not have been tried and sentenced for helping kulaks. Kelly confirms that – according to local gossip – Pavlik's father did go off with another woman, and that Pavlik, an unpopular boy, was a habitual snitch whose killing, committed by Morozov family members, was a consequence of his snitching. Her own best guess, however, is that Pavlik was killed by two young men, his cousin Danila (convicted of the murder in the original trial in 1932, along with his grandfather and one of his uncles) and another villager, Efrem Shatrakov (convicted on the lesser charge of failing to prevent the murder), because of resentment arising out of his denunciations and a quarrel over a piece of horse harness. In the end, though, 'the Morozov murder case is likely to remain open for ever … the substance of the boy is long gone, evaporated in fantasy, fiction and deliberate lies – as created by Soviet myth-makers, by provincial journalists, by police investigators and, not least, by his fellow villagers.'

The evolution of the Pavlik myth in the Soviet Union is one of the most interesting parts of Kelly's account. The story was first publicised, in connection with the trial of Pavlik's alleged killers, in the local newspaper. Then it was picked up by *Pioneer Pravda*. But the real breakthrough came when Maxim Gorky spoke to the Communist youth organisation in 1933 of 'the heroic deed of Pioneer Pavlik Morozov, the boy who understood that a person who is a relative by blood may well be an enemy of the spirit, and that such a person is not to be spared'. Gorky was an ally and favourite of Stalin's, but this particular initiative does not seem to have been to Stalin's taste, at least according to rumour: 'What a little swine, denouncing his own father,' is one remark attributed to him. Nevertheless, a Pavlik Morozov cult took off. Streets, parks and clubs were named after him, plays and songs written. Eisenstein even made a film, *Bezhin*

Meadow (1936), freely adapted from the Pavlik legend, though it failed to win favour. In 1948, a monument to Pavlik – admittedly less grand than the one originally projected, and not in Red Square – was sculpted by Izaak Rabinovich and erected in a once revolutionary district of Moscow, Krasnaya Presnya. In 1955, Pavlik was canonised 'in the Book of Honour of the Moscow Pioneer Palace, as "Pioneer No. 001"'. Pavlik's reputation had its ups and downs. In the 1940s, he was temporarily eclipsed by Arkady Gaidar's fictional boy hero, Timur, as well as by various teenage partisans martyred during the war; in the 1960s and 1970s, he made something of a comeback. The emphasis in the myth itself tended to shift from the virtue of his denunciation to his bravery in challenging the village consensus and his martyrdom. By the 1970s and 1980s, a strong current of anti-Pavlik feeling was developing among the intelligentsia, based on dislike of him for squealing to an increasingly discredited state. In the course of her extensive researches on children and children's memories in the Soviet Union, Kelly has found that many people remember being moved by the Pavlik myth as children – not necessarily because of their pro-Soviet feelings, but out of admiration for his bravery and horror at his death. She compares its disturbing power over Soviet children's imaginations with the 'stirring but strange' legend of the Spartan boy stoically refusing to cry out when his innards were gnawed by a fox, which used to be read to British schoolchildren.

In 1991, Pavlik's statue was one of the first to fall, along with that of Felix Dzerzhinsky. The statue in Ekaterinburg, then still called Sverdlovsk, also disappeared. But in 2003, in an odd twist, George Soros's Open Society Foundation gave $7000 to the Ekaterinburg branch of the Memorial society to help re-establish 'a Pavlik Morozov museum of a radically new kind' – putting the legend in its context of forced collectivisation and drawing on oral histories of the repressed. Not everyone reacted favourably to this idea: Kelly reports that some people suspected that 'the museum would be pushing its own ideological line, a simplistically anti-Soviet, pro-Western one, all with the aid of Western money.' However bizarre the form, it seems that the Pavlik legend lives on.

Pavlik's story 'raises important issues about civic duty that are valid well beyond the context of the Soviet system', Kelly writes. But these issues receive relatively short shrift in her book, which is understandable, given the detail and complexity of the material with which she has to deal and the fact that her book for much of its length

belongs to the genre of the historical detective story. But the moral issues are worth exploring further.

Many Russians would warmly endorse E.M. Forster's belief that private loyalties trump public ones, given the low regard in which they hold their current (and former) government: Kelly notes that in recent decades in Russia and the Soviet Union the concept of loyalty to a tight group of friends and family has been so exalted, and that of loyalty to the state so depressed, that 'the idea that one might – in whatever circumstances – report a misdeed by a member of … a closed group to the police or government authorities (whose reputation for probity is non-existent) would strike many people as laughable.'

In the US, people like to think well of their government. Thus, Forster's *Two Cheers for Democracy* was certainly one too few in the opinion of such critics as the philosopher Judith Shklar, who hotly disputed his preference for private over national loyalty. While denunciation was undoubtedly immoral under the Nazi and Soviet regimes, Shklar argued, it is both moral and necessary in democratic countries like the United States and Britain, where the governments deserve their citizens' trust and a 'decent legal system' gives recourse to innocent victims. Hence, there is no real commensurability between informing on a fellow citizen in the United States and performing a similar act in the Soviet Union. As with the morality of sexual intercourse inside and outside marriage, everything depends on institutional context.

Commensurability was a big problem in Anglo-American Soviet studies during the Cold War. In the 1970s and 1980s, many people felt that any comparative analysis, even the implicit comparison involved in the use of (supposedly universal) social-science terms like 'interest groups' and 'social mobility', presupposed a moral equivalence between democratic and totalitarian societies and was an attempt to whitewash the latter. By the 1990s, such views were on the wane: even denunciation (which Sovietologists had treated as a purely totalitarian phenomenon) seemed ripe for comparative treatment. In 1997, Robert Gellately and I edited a comparative volume called *Accusatory Practices: Denunciation in Modern European History 1789-1989*. This was around the time of the attempted impeachment of President Clinton, which featured a denunciation of Monica Lewinsky by her erstwhile friend Linda Tripp, and the *New York Times* was intrigued by the idea that denunciation might be part of the American democratic tradition ('Before Tripp, a Long Line of Denouncers', 30 January

1999). The *Times* did sound a note of caution about commensurability, quoting Gellately on the difference between the likely consequences of denunciation in America and in the Soviet Union or Nazi Germany: 'While someone in the United States can easily report a neighbour they do not like as a crack dealer or child molester, that neighbour still has protections under the American judicial system: the right to a lawyer, due process, the right to a trial.' Reviewing our book in the *LRB* on 19 March 1998, Timothy Garton Ash took a sterner view, describing the whole comparison between Stalinist denouncers and American whistle-blowers as 'a ludicrous piece of pseudo-liberal moral relativism'.

In the light of recent developments in both Britain and the United States, however, real liberals as well as the pseudo variety may need to revisit the question of denunciation in democratic societies: not in the interests of moral relativism but because there are real moral issues involved. The argument over morality cuts two ways. If commensurability may imply a moral equivalence ('the Soviets were no worse than we are'), insistence on incommensurability may be a way of getting ourselves, rather than the Soviets, off the hook ('since our government is democratic, we don't need to worry about the morality of denunciation').

It is not hard to draw a clear moral distinction between denouncing a Jew in Nazi Germany, a political dissident in the old GDR, and a terrorist in present-day Germany. But these are comparatively easy cases, since the offence being denounced is directly related to the political values of the regime in question, and it is (relatively) easy to assign 'good' and 'bad' labels to these regimes. (Shift the cases to Turkey or Pakistan, for example, and the good/bad dichotomy immediately becomes trickier.) But what about non-political denunciation, where the targets are, let's say, serial murderers, arsonists and drug peddlers? Such people threaten the welfare of the community, and even 'bad' states carry out necessary functions of community protection. Does it make sense, following Shklar's argument to its logical conclusion, to say that denouncing a serial murderer would be an act of civic virtue in the Federal Republic of Germany but would have been morally dubious in the GDR and totally immoral under the Third Reich? The same problem applies to whistle-blowing, for it is surely wrong to argue that an insider's denunciation of corruption in an American corporation like Enron is moral and courageous, while a similar, but even more risky act in the Soviet Union (relating, say, to corruption in one of the big oil trusts) would not have been.

Imagine Denunciations, a parlour game, in which you, as a player, have to decide whose wrongdoing, and wrongdoing of what kind, to denounce to the authorities: your son's marijuana-growing; your neighbour's tax evasion; a colleague's affair with a student; a commuter who parks without a permit in front of your house; an Islamic extremist; an illegal immigrant; a paedophile schoolteacher or Scout leader; a sexist boss. Are all these denunciations equal in moral terms? Which, if any, could properly be addressed to a non-democratic government? Within the democratic context, to which authorities – local police, FBI/MI5, the inland revenue, your child's headmaster, your immediate boss at work – would you be willing to pass information, and what euphemism would you use? You might even go a step further and require players to offer their own most recent experience of denunciation, either as victim or as perpetrator.

Denunciation for everyday offences is always with us. Nevertheless, its pervasiveness, as revealed by a search of the *Chicago Tribune* in the early 1990s, came as a surprise. That search turned up not only a multitude of new items but also a commentary, 'Goodbye, good neighbour policy; hello, public snitching' (21 October 1994), warning that

Big Brother, as it turns out, may be your little brother, your former sister-in-law or the neighbour whose power-saw you forgot to return last summer. In a phenomenon that gives a new twist to the concept of community policing, people in Chicago's suburbs are busily snitching on each other over zoning infractions … Meanwhile, Chicago officials, in hopes of enticing the more jaded city dweller to do the same, are contemplating offering people money to turn in the brazen scofflaws who don't buy their annual vehicle stickers.

Recently, as a result both of the growth of the web and the 'war on terrorism', it has become easier than ever to denounce, and the calls to do so have become more urgent. 'Help your country,' exhorts the official US government website, FirstGov. 'Provide tips, support the troops, volunteer, donate.' 'Submit a tip' is prominently displayed on the FBI's counter-terrorism website, which offers an online form as well as a toll-free hotline. The State of Pennsylvania advertises a special email address for tips on terrorism. MI5, too, has its own 'anti-terrorist hotline' (call 0800 789 321) and its website says: 'If you know something about threats to national security, we want to hear from you.' The Department for Work and Pensions is even more forthright with

its National Benefit Fraud Hotline: ‘Report a cheat’ is the injunction (‘you do not need to tell us who you are’), followed by a remarkably detailed form for online reporting of the frauds practised by your neighbours. The British Public Interest Disclosure Act was passed in 1998 to protect whistle-blowers from dismissal and victimisation.

This wave of vigilance has not gone unremarked or unprotested. In 2002 the Bush administration’s new Citizen Corps (a department of FEMA) proposed a new national Terrorism Information and Prevention System (TIPS) for reporting ‘suspicious and potentially terrorist-related activity’, but this had to be hastily abandoned after widespread objections. The programme was to have ‘involved the millions of American workers who, in the daily course of their work, are in a unique position to serve as extra eyes and ears for law enforcement’ – truck drivers, bus drivers, train conductors, mail carriers, utility readers and so on. (This text, now deleted from the Citizencorps website, is quoted from a retrieval site called the Memory Hole.) Unfounded denunciations, such as that by a Chicago man who admitted to having falsely accused his relatives of links to Osama bin Laden and plans to blow up the Sears Tower (reported by the Associated Press on 16 August), have led to prosecutions in the US. The authorities’ pro-denunciation websites have generated some anti-denunciation sites as well, such as Operation TIP-TIPS for denouncing denouncers, with its spoof encouragement to ‘aspiring citizen informants … to demonstrate their patriotism by using this form to report any and all suspicious persons to the authorities … Liberal, Homo, Intellectual, Falafel-Breath … Gun Control Nut, ACLUer, Homeless, Academic, Welfare Mother, Immigrant … (check all that apply).’

It is easier for civil libertarians to attack programs like TIPS than to say exactly what guidelines and boundaries for reporting fellow citizens to the authorities can or should be set. But the ‘war on terrorism’, with its creation of a demonised category of ‘terrorist’ and removal of the normal safeguards for persons under suspicion, obviously complicates the moral question about denunciation, as well as undermining the argument for the incommensurability of denunciation under ‘good’ and ‘bad’ governments. Is it still possible to say – as Robert Gellately quite reasonably did in 1999 – that denunciation in democratic countries is different and not morally problematic because everyone is assured of due legal process? Not in the US or UK if it’s an accusation of terrorism. Yet, despite that, there are real terrorist threats, and most of us would probably recognise a duty to denounce if we had hard information of,

for example, a forthcoming bomb attack in the New York subway. But what of a latter-day Arab-American Pavlik: if he suspects his father of terrorism, should he denounce him?

[*] An earlier edition, *The Apotheosis of Pavlik Morozov*, was published in 1988.

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Letters

Vol. 27 No. 22 · 17 November 2005

Reading Sheila Fitzpatrick's creepy account of Pavlik Morozov and the more general reflections on the ethics of snitching with which she ends (*LRB*, 3 November), I immediately thought of the case currently being tried at the Old Bailey of Parveen Sharif. This Muslim woman, a schoolteacher in Derby, is the sister of one of the two young British Muslims who set off two years ago to become suicide bombers in Israel, supposedly under the orders of Hamas. In the event, her brother, Omar Sharif, didn't manage for whatever reason to set off his bomb but was later found drowned in the Mediterranean. The bomb exploded by his companion killed three people in a Tel Aviv nightclub. Parveen Sharif was accused of having encouraged her brother to become a terrorist and – this is where Sheila Fitzpatrick's thoughts about the rights and wrongs of denunciation come in – failing to inform the authorities of his intentions, failing that's to say to turn in her own brother. She was tried for a first time on these charges, also at the Old Bailey, in August 2004. After a trial lasting nine weeks, the jury failed to reach a verdict; hence the second Old Bailey trial, which began on 6 October.

Not having noticed any press reports on the progress of this second trial since it began, I assumed that if the media had lost interest, which they certainly shouldn't have, I'd be able to find something on the brave new information highway. Not so, however. There are close on 30,000 websites purportedly having some reference to Parveen Sharif but on none of the ones I had the patience to call up could I find any account of the current court proceedings. Given that the second reading of the government's proposed new anti-terrorism legislation has just taken place in the House of Commons, one begins to wonder, infected, it may be, by the conspiracy pandemic, whether reports of the case, which we have to assume is still being argued out at the Old Bailey, have been suppressed, since they would be bound to have a very strong bearing on public reactions to the government's proposals. Could Parveen Sharif be charged, for example, under the new legislation with the weird and unprecedented offence of 'glorifying' terrorism, the word 'glorifying' itself suggesting that the drafters of the bill have been sitting for too long at the feet

of Alastair Campbell, when the old 'encouraging', which is what Ms Sharif is specifically accused of having done, is patently sufficient and already enshrined in the statute invoked to bring her to court?

It would be reassuring to be able to read more of the present state of the Old Bailey proceedings, and reassuring, for some of us at least, were Ms Sharif to be cleared of any offence at the end of her retrial.

William Livesey
Manchester

When I lived and worked in Moscow in the mid-1970s, the spirit of Pavlik Morozov, discussed by Sheila Fitzpatrick, was alive and well. Everyone was expected to inform: failure to do so was a crime. But in case Evgeny or Tatiana failed in their duty, there were official informers. Every apartment building had its block sneak – usually a woman – recognisable by the brassard worn on the sleeve of her coat. Intourist hotels had a 'keeper of the keys' on every floor who reported on the comings and goings of guests and their visitors. Even in my office, where all the Soviet staff came from UPDK (the KGB equivalent of the Brook Street Bureau), there was no secret about who reported my activities every week (my driver), and who reported on her colleagues (one of the typists).

In the UK, on the other hand, to inform is socially unacceptable, even when serious crimes have been committed, and most information leading to arrests is either motivated by personal animus or comes from paid informers. Here in Kent, with its long history of smuggling, there are many villages where most of the tobacco smoked was, until a recent crackdown, obtainable tax-free. The smugglers were known, but no one thought of dobbing anyone in. Shortly after community officers started foot patrols last year, it was discovered that a significant minority of cars parked on the street (in some towns up to 40 per cent) had neither current licence discs nor insurance cover. Everyone knew about it, but nobody blabbed. The Mafia, it appears, does not have a monopoly on omertà.

Tony Neville
Lydd, Kent

Vol. 27 No. 23 · 1 December 2005

William Livesey (Letters, 17 November) raised the case of Parveen Sharif, the Muslim woman who has been accused of encouraging terrorism and is currently being retried at the Old Bailey, and wondered why we hadn't read a word about how the trial is going. We still haven't so far as I'm aware. It's almost as if the media had been banned from reporting it on the catch-all grounds of national security, something one wouldn't put beyond the Home Office. The silence is all the

more extraordinary and suggestive because we've just had the third and final reading of the government's new anti-terrorist legislation in the House of Commons and by the time the next issue of the *LRB*appears, the bill will have gone to be debated in the House of Lords before being enacted, unless of course the Lords do what we would like them to do and send it back. Ms Sharif, it will be remembered, is charged with not having told the authorities that her brother was planning to commit a terrorist act, but instead encouraging him to go ahead and do it, an offence seemingly in its own right even though the email supporting him was a purely private communication. Omar Sharif was intending to explode a suicide bomb not here but in Israel – against another country and another population, that is to say. This automatically brings back into view the question of how 'terrorism' is to be defined, a difficult question that has been raised time and again in recent years and has let's hope been raised once more in the course of the proceedings at the Old Bailey. We all know that acts of violence construable as terrorist by some will be construed by others as legitimate acts of resistance on the part of populations suffering under some form of oppression. A second aspect of the case against Ms Sharif was also highly relevant to the debate in the Commons, which ended, Labour rebels be praised, with the government's defeat and the reduction of the period for which terrorist suspects can be held without charge from a monstrous 90 days to a bearable but still shameful 28. The coverage of the debate concentrated exclusively on that bit of the proposed legislation, thereby overlooking the other bit, to which Livesey also drew attention, which creates the new and preposterous offence of 'glorifying' acts of terrorism, the way over the top term 'glorification' now being asked to take the place of the subdued 'encouragement' of which Ms Sharif was guilty (or not). It's as if the Home Office – or else the unelected body that now manages, alarmingly, to speak through it: I mean the Metropolitan Police – feared that no future jury would want to bring in a conviction when someone is charged with anything as mild as encouragement. It's usually thought to be a good thing to go around offering encouragement after all, whereas to go around offering glorification takes us into a fresh dimension of well-wishing. But glorification is what we're faced with none the less, because that clause of the bill seems to have gone through on the nod during the third reading, so obsessed were the legislators with deciding how long a period the police needed to be able productively (or not) to interrogate those they had banged up on suspicion. If the House of Lords is also caught nodding and 'glorification' is the description the courts must live with, I can foresee absurd philological set-tos between cavilling barristers that will not do the dignity of our criminal justice system any good at all.

Neil Forster
London N1

The new Crimestoppers 'Britain's most wanted' website crashed within hours of going online, after receiving more than 200,000 hits, when it was prepared for no more than a tenth of that. The aim of the site seems to be to encourage all the latent Comrade Pavliks out there to dob in the men next door who look like crooks on the run. Crimestoppers – which is a charity, apparently, as Eton and Harrow are – clearly underestimated the willingness of modern Britons to hand their shady neighbours over to the law. Either that, or they underestimated the extent to which the internet gives free reign to voyeurs and gawkers, for whom a monthly dose of *Crimewatch UK* on the BBC just isn't enough.

Barry Inder
Keighley

Sheila Fitzpatrick, looking at the history of Stalinist denunciation, wonders what the position would be of a person of Arab origin in the US, or indeed the UK, nowadays if they thought that one of their relations was possibly a terrorist. The likely answer, at least in the UK, is that they would be arrested for the crime of failing to inform. I would have said that Fitzpatrick's piece was giving New Labour ideas, but the cabinet has enough experts in the methods of Stalinism to have got there first.

Keith Flett
London N17

Sheila Fitzpatrick says that Eisenstein's 1936 film *Bezhin Meadow* was freely adapted from the Pavlik legend. I've always understood that it was based on the story called 'Bezhin Lug' (*lug* is the Russian for 'meadow') in Turgenev's *Sportsman's Sketches*. The central character in the story is a teenage boy called Pavel, which might have caused the confusion.

Anna Berger
Geneva

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'When I lived and worked in Moscow in the mid-1970s,' Tony Neville writes, 'everyone was expected to inform: failure to do so was a crime' (Letters, 17 November). I was born in Leningrad in 1939, and lived and worked in the USSR until my emigration in 1979. Throughout that time, neither I nor others, to my knowledge, expected to inform or be informed on. Certainly, we were aware of the KGB and so on, but within the frame of that awareness we led a pretty full life. Drafted as a physician into the Soviet navy, I was dishonourably discharged in 1970

for ‘reading and spreading anti-Soviet propaganda’. Not because I was brave, but, precisely, because I was oblivious. True, during my ‘trial of honour’ by my fellow officers I became aware of a network of informers in the military. But quite a few ‘seditious’ things that I had, quite frivolously, done or said during my five-year service hadn’t been reported. Of about twenty officers on the ship only two did inform, and those who didn’t were not charged. I was surprised that some of those who took to the podium condemned the trial itself, not me.

Valentin Lyubarsky
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Neil Forster (Letters, 1 December) remarks that Parveen Sharif’s communication to her brother, which it seems is what was relied on by the prosecution as encouraging him in his terrorist project, ‘was a purely private communication’, as if somehow that makes it all right. Leaving aside exactly what a ‘purely private’ email might be (for example, under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act and the Communications Act), is it right or even possible to distinguish between private encouragement and encouragement in public? Can Forster be saying that private communications should always be off limits where possible criminal offences are concerned?

Simon Cockshutt
London W5

I sailed away with a mighty push, never to return

Sheila Fitzpatrick

- *The Jewish Century* by Yuri Slezkine
  Princeton, 438 pp, £18.95, October 2004, ISBN 0 691 11995 3

This book changed my sense of the big story of Soviet history as well as the big story of the Jews in the modern world.[*] Chapter 4, in particular, the interpretative history of Jews in the Soviet Union (and the United States and Israel), which takes up almost half the book, should be compulsory reading for everyone who has ever expressed an opinion on the subject.

Yuri Slezkine dedicates the book to his grandmother: not the Russian noblewoman who, despite having ‘lost everything she owned in the Revolution’, ‘at the end of her life … was a loyal Soviet citizen at peace with her past and at home in her country’, but the

other grandmother, Berta (Brokhe) Iosifovna Kostrinskaia, born in the Pale of Settlement, who 'went to prison as a Communist, emigrated to Argentina, and returned in 1931 to take part in the building of socialism. In her old age, she took great pride in her Jewish ancestors and considered most of her life to have been a mistake.' *The Jewish Century* is an exploration of that 'mistake': the love affair of Russian Jews with the Russian Revolution. Slezkine probably shares her final view of the cause to which she devoted her life, but the dedication implies more than sympathy. Soviet history has generally left out its Jewish component (except for the anti-semitic campaign of the late Stalin period), just as 20th-century Jewish history has left out its Soviet component (with the same exception). This book is an act of historical recovery.

It starts by creating a category, 'Mercurians', the purpose of which is simultaneously to explain the singularity of the Jews and to diminish it by making them part of a larger group. Mercurians are 'the descendants … of Hermes, the god of all those who did not herd animals, till the soil or live by the sword; the patron of rule breakers, border crossers, and go-betweens; the protector of people who lived by their wit, craft and art'. They are diasporic 'service nomads', in Slezkine's term, who provide various services and skills to the natives they live among, whom Slezkine calls 'Apollonians'. Mercurians were

transients and wanderers – from fully nomadic Gypsy groups, to mostly commercial communities divided into fixed brokers and travelling agents, to permanently settled populations who thought of themselves as exiles. Whether they knew no homeland, like the Irish travellers or the Sheikh Mohammadi, or had lost it, like the Armenians and the Jews, or had no political ties to it, like the Overseas Indians or Lebanese, they were perpetual resident aliens and vocational foreigners.

Mercurians were 'admired but also feared and despised' by Apollonians, and these feelings – at least the last two – were mutual. The Mercurians, embodied in classical mythology by Odysseus, 'possess a quality that the Greeks called *metis*, or "cunning intelligence" (with an emphasis on either "cunning" or "intelligence", depending on who does the labelling)'; and they tended to take a dim view of slow-witted Apollonian Ivans. For much of human history, Slezkine concludes, Apollonians and Mercurians 'have lived next to each other in mutual scorn and suspicion – not because of ignorant superstition but because they have had the chance to get to know each other'.

Suspicion increased with the advent of capitalism and modern state nationalisms, which, on the one hand, required Mercurian rather than Apollonian skills and, on the other, marginalised Jews and other diasporic (non-national) peoples. Ever greater Jewish business and professional success was accompanied by growing anti-semitism in the increasingly nationalist nation-states of Europe and – by way of revolt against Jewish parents as well as anti-Jewish discrimination – the growing involvement of young Jews in socialist and revolutionary movements. When a son was born in 1889 to Alexander Helphand (Parvus), 'world revolutionary, international financier and future German government agent', he announced 'the birth of a healthy, cheerful enemy of the state'.

It is often suggested that Jewish advancement in Russia was blocked by the quotas introduced in the 1880s. But Slezkine, following Benjamin Nathans's lead in *Beyond the Pale: The Jewish Encounter with Late Imperial Russia* (2002), shows that the quotas 'succeeded in slowing down the Jewish advance in the professions but failed to halt it'. By 1913, a majority of dentists in St Petersburg were Jewish, as were almost a fifth of its doctors and a large contingent of lawyers. These were Jews who had left the Pale, sometimes formal converts to Christianity. However, the two really important Jewish 'conversions' in Slezkine's argument were not to Christianity but to revolutionary socialism and Russian literature, both of which drove a wedge between generations in many Jewish families. 'I sailed away with a mighty push, never to return,' Trotsky wrote. Despising his family's 'instinct of acquisitiveness' and 'petit-bourgeois outlook', he too had fallen in love with Russian literature as well as revolution. 'Many, too many of us, children of the Jewish intelligentsia, are madly, shamefully in love with Russian culture,' the Zionist Vladimir Jabotinsky lamented in 1903. Paradoxically, their eager embrace of 'the Pushkin faith' (as Slezkine calls it) made Jewish intellectuals co-creators of the icons of cultural nationalism that emerged in most Central and East European states and would-be states at the turn of the century: it wasn't a matter just of Pushkin in Russia but of Goethe and Schiller in Germany, Petöfi in Hungary, and Mickiewicz in Polish lands.

The steady but relatively small stream of departures from the Pale to major cities of the Russian Empire in the late 19th and early 20th centuries turned into a flood with the 1917 Revolution and the Civil War that followed. The Jewish population of Moscow, Russia's new capital, grew by a factor of almost ten between 1912 and 1926, and

continued to grow until by 1939 it had reached 250,000, making Jews the second largest ethnic group in the city. More than a million first-generation emigrants from the Pale were living elsewhere in the Soviet Union, mainly the big cities, at the outbreak of the Second World War. This demographic shift, which warrants further study, was of enormous significance, not just for the history of Russia's Jews but also for the social and cultural history of Russia.

We come now to the crux of Slezkine's narrative: Jewish identification with the Revolution and its success in the new Soviet state. The more familiar story of Jews in the Soviet Union is a story of victimisation (which Slezkine also tells); while the success story, or propaganda versions of it, was appropriated by the Nazis and subsequently by other anti-semites, and has tended to be shunned as a result. But avoiding certain questions because one may not like the answers is a kind of intellectual dishonesty, no matter how virtuous the motives (my comment, not Slezkine's: his work, for all its potential for controversy, is free of polemics). It is, in fact, impossible to understand the victimisation of Jews of the late Stalin period, and its weaker versions thereafter, without understanding the achievements and standing of the group being victimised.

Many Jews of the younger generation joined the Revolutionary movement in Russia, most often the Menshevik Party or the Bund in the pre-Revolutionary period, but many also joined the Bolshevik Party. They embraced the October Revolution and quickly became, as Slezkine shows, 'the backbone of the new Soviet bureaucracy'. In the top Party leadership of the 1920s, Jews were the largest single ethnic group (though secular atheists whose parents and shtetl background had been left behind in Trotsky's 'mighty push'); they included Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Sverdlov and Kaganovich – though only Kaganovich remained at Politburo level through the 1930s and beyond. As it turned out, even Lenin, who fully appreciated the Jewish contribution to the Revolution, had a Jewish maternal grandfather, though he probably didn't know it. Within the Party leadership's relatively small contingent of ethnic Russians in the prewar period, a remarkably large number were married to Jewish women, among them the Politburo members Molotov, Voroshilov, Andreev, Bukharin, Rykov and Kirov.

Jews were an important presence not only in the Soviet political elite but also among the intelligentsia. This was a continuation of late imperial tendencies, but mass emigration from the Pale had brought about a dramatic increase in scale. By 1939,

Jews were by far the most educated national group in the Soviet population: under 2 per cent of the total population, they constituted a seventh of all Soviet citizens with higher education, second only to Russians in absolute numbers. In that same year, a third of young Jewish men and women in the 19-24 age group were college students compared to one in 20 of the age group as a whole; while in Leningrad (Moscow figures were roughly similar) around 70 per cent of dentists, 40 per cent of doctors, 30 per cent of writers, journalists and editors, and almost 20 per cent of scientists and university professors were Jews. In other words, Jewish upward mobility needs to be added to the upward mobility of Russian workers and peasants and culturally 'backward' Central Asians as a key process in the formation of a new Soviet elite, even though Jews, unlike the other groups, were not the subject of formal state 'affirmative action' programmes.

As Slezkine points out, the Jewish contingent in the Soviet intelligentsia, secularised and assimilated, was notable for its Soviet and Communist orientation, comparable in this respect only to the *vydvizhentsy*, but surpassing them in cultural confidence and educational level. Slezkine calls them 'the most important and most influential generation in the history of the Soviet cultural elite'. Many had severed ties with their parents, whom they often despised for their backwardness and commercialism, as in this chilling repudiation by the popular Komsomol poet Eduard Bagritsky:

Their love?
But what about their lice-eaten braids,
Their crooked, jutting-out collar bones,
Their pimples, their herring-smeared mouths,
The curve of their horselike necks.
My parents?

But this kind of anti-semitism was the prerogative of Jews writing autobiographically. The Party's policies in the interwar period were strongly opposed to ethnic or racial discrimination, and teaching people not to be anti-semitic was a major aspect of Soviet propaganda. Potential resentment of Jewish success was no doubt defused by affirmative action programmes for other groups and the huge overall expansion of educational and employment opportunities that came at the end of the 1920s with the First Five-Year Plan. The 'new-minted, self-confident, optimistic and passionately

patriotic' Soviet intelligentsia of the 1930s, Slezkine concludes, showed 'no anti-Jewish hostility and generally very few manifestations of ethnic ranking or labelling'.

The Great Purges of the late 1930s were a milestone but not yet a turning point in the history of Soviet Jews. Most of the victims of the Great Purges were members of an elite (especially the political elite), some minority nationalities, or those on the margins of society (tramps, beggars, runaways from the Gulag, habitual criminals). As a minority nationality, and one disproportionately represented in the Soviet elites, Jews look like prime potential targets, but the reality was more complicated. As Slezkine shows, using data collected in post-Soviet archives by Russian historians, Jews from the political elite indeed suffered heavily (among the victims was Parvus's son Evgeny Gnedin, sometime head of the press department of the Foreign Affairs Ministry, dedicated by his father from birth to the revolutionary struggle). But this was because they were members of the elite, not because they were Jews: non-Jewish elite members suffered equally.

As for minority nationalities, those targeted were the 'diaspora' nationalities like Poles, Finns and Koreans who had a nation-state outside the Soviet Union but, in most cases, no autonomous national territory within it; and Jews were not on this list. In fact, 'Jews were the only large Soviet nationality without its own "native" territory that was not targeted for a purge during the Great Terror,' which could mean that their exclusion was a matter of policy. Overall – and this is a somewhat surprising finding, reminding us that we tend to overestimate elite victims just because we know more about them – Jews were not over-represented among Great Purge victims, because of their under-representation in targeted non-elite groups.

Jews in the Soviet cultural and intellectual elite – among them the writers Isaac Babel and Eduard Bagritsky, and Meyerhold, the great theatre director – suffered along with non-Jews during the Great Purges, especially if they had close personal ties to purged Communist leaders. And no doubt many of them, like Babel, were interrogated by Jewish members of the security police, one of the Soviet institutions with a particularly high proportion of Jewish officers (almost 40 per cent of the NKVD's top officials at the beginning of 1937). Although Slezkine does not provide data on the post-Purge leadership of the NKVD, very few of this group can have survived the purging of the purgers instituted by the new head of the NKVD, Lavrenti Beria. In the wake of the Great Purges, newly-promoted *vydvizhentsy* of working-class and peasant origin swept

into top positions throughout the Soviet administration. Comparatively few of them were Jews; and the Jewish share in the post-Purge political elite dropped accordingly. But that was not the case with regard to the intelligentsia, where Jews were still strongly over-represented and notable for their Soviet loyalties and high rate of Party membership at the outbreak of the Second World War.

It was in the postwar period that everything started to go wrong: a story that Russian scholars like Gennady Kostyrchenko and Israeli scholars like Mordechai Altshuler, whose work Slezkine draws on, have been researching in newly opened archives over the past decade. On the one hand, the Nazi example of mistreatment of Jews seems to have reawakened popular anti-semitism among Ukrainians and Russians both in the occupied territories and in the Soviet army, and perhaps had the same effect on Stalin. On the other hand, the Nazi destruction of European Jewry shook up Russia's Jews, including the secularised Communists who, for the first time in decades, suddenly felt the need to proclaim their Jewishness. As Kostyrchenko was the first to show (in his book published in English in 1995 as *Out of the Red Shadows: Anti-Semitism in Stalin's Russia*), this groundswell of support created an extraordinary situation for the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, a 'voluntary organisation' set up during the war which was supposed, like all other Soviet voluntary organisations, to mobilise a particular popular constituency, not to be mobilised by it. The JAFC started pressing the Party leadership to revive the long-dormant project for a Jewish autonomous territory in the Crimea (partly depopulated by the deportation of Crimean Turks during the war, and much more attractive than the struggling and distant Jewish autonomous region of Birobidzhan in the Far East). On top of this, the creation of the state of Israel changed the status of Jews in the Soviet Union: they were now a 'diaspora' nationality with a nation-state outside the USSR to which they might conceivably feel a primary loyalty; their ecstatic reception of Golda Meir on her visit to Moscow in 1948 drove this point home.

The predictable happened: the JAFC was dissolved and its leaders put on secret trial before being executed for treason. This was a tragic hour for Soviet Jews but also a fine one, mainly because of the comportment of Solomon Lozovsky, the Old Bolshevik who headed the JAFC: in contrast to the Bukharin/ *Darkness at Noon* model of confessing everything, no matter how bizarre the accusations, 'for the good of the cause', Lozovsky was unintimidated and pointed out the absurdity of the charges against him, thus

emboldening his fellow defendants and even shaking the presiding judge's belief in his guilt. *Pace* Slezkine, who incorrectly writes that Lozovsky's 'eloquence' was 'wasted on his hanging judges', the presiding judge was so impressed by his testimony and the lack of material evidence against the defendants that he put up an unprecedented, though ultimately unsuccessful, struggle against the death sentence behind the scenes.[†]

The postwar anti-semitic campaign reached its apogee early in 1953 with the announcement of the discovery of the 'Doctors' Plot' against the Soviet state and its leaders. The defendants were almost all Jewish physicians from the upper echelons of the profession. Rumours flew round Moscow to the effect that the entire Jewish population was to be deported, though whether the leadership actually had such plans remains unclear, despite diligent searching of the archives. On Stalin's death in March 1953, the case was abruptly closed, the doctors released, and the anti-semitic campaign of Stalin's last years halted. It was too late, however, to prevent enormous damage being done not only to Soviet Jews but to the Soviet intelligentsia and the regime itself. As Slezkine says, that campaign 'was directed at some of the most vital and articulate elements of the Soviet state – and it contradicted some of that state's most fundamental official values.' There would be a big price to pay in the future. Before the late Stalinist anti-semitic campaign, Jews formed the core of intelligentsia support for the regime, and arguably of the Soviet intelligentsia itself; after it, not only were Jews alienated and disoriented but so, if to a lesser degree, was the intelligentsia as a whole. Though Slezkine does not push his argument that far, it is tempting to see this as a turning-point on the road that ended in the Soviet collapse of 1991: the first stage in the regime's progressive and ultimately fatal loss of legitimacy in the eyes of the educated elite.

The story of postwar anti-semitism is the 'victim story' that so many commentators have taken to be the whole story of the Jews in the Soviet Union. What happened, as Slezkine makes clear, is not that Jews were expelled from the elite or subjected to out and out persecution, but rather that they descended to a second-level elite status which was particularly painful both because of their past successes and Soviet loyalty, and because, for the first time, everyday anti-semitism became permissible in at least some quarters of the intelligentsia. Jews 'remained by far the most successful and the most modern – occupationally and demographically – of all Soviet nationalities', with the

proportion of Jewish wage and salary earners who were college graduates five times as high as among Russians. The attempt to limit Jewish access to higher education and top jobs in the Khrushchev period was both 'relatively small-scale' and 'not very successful', in Slezkine's judgment, but its 'secrecy, inconsistency and concentration on elite positions made it all the more frustrating'.

The Jewish reaction, however, was one of outrage. Slezkine quotes the claim of Mikhail Agursky, a Soviet dissident who emigrated to Israel in 1975, that

the Jews had been converted into an estate of slaves. Could one really expect that a nation that had given the Soviet state political leaders, diplomats, generals, and top economic managers would agree to become an estate whose boldest dream would be a position as head of a lab at the Experimental Machine-Tool Research Institute or senior researcher at the Automatics and Telemechanics Institute?

As Slezkine remarks, Agursky's assertion that 'the Jews were oppressed and humiliated to a much greater degree than the rest of the population' may 'on the face of it … appear patently untrue and perhaps morally questionable', given the oppressions visited on (for example) deported Crimean Tatars or even ordinary Russian peasants who, unlike city-dwellers, were not yet routinely issued with internal passports that allowed them to move freely about the country. However, he charitably interprets this as a requirement of the genre: Agursky was not writing history, 'he was writing a memoir about the making of a rebel, and what made Jewish rebels was the perception of unrelieved humiliation.' Jewish intellectuals – among them Parvus's son Evgeny Gnedin, who survived his imprisonment – were as prominent in the dissident movement that emerged in the 1960s as they had earlier been in the Revolutionary one.

With dissidence came the demand to emigrate, taken up with Cold War enthusiasm by the United States Congress and leading to a remarkable situation in the 1970s whereby emigration – a privilege unavailable to almost all the rest of the population – became possible for Jews, arousing a resentment among Russians that only increased the feelings of formerly assimilated Soviet Jews that they should leave. The collapse of the Soviet Union at the beginning of the 1990s was ipso facto the end of the story of Jews in the Soviet Union; it was followed by a much larger wave of Jewish emigration. Yet not all Jews emigrated. In a striking throwback to the situation in the 1920s, when the short-lived business class of Soviet 'Nepmen' was predominantly Jewish, Jews like

Boris Berezovsky, Vladimir Gusinsky and Mikhail Khodorkovsky were prominent not just among the so-called 'oligarchs' but also in the wider class of New Russians, whose ethnic composition was sufficiently non-Russian to give the term a tinge of irony. Once again, Mercurians seized opportunities while slower-witted Apollonians hung back.

Slezkine's narrative isn't confined to the history of Jews in Russia. The Soviet Union was only one of the 'three Promised Lands' beckoning to Jews in the Pale. The others were the United States and Palestine (Israel), and each had its own distinctive ideology and promises. To tell this story, Slezkine introduces a new metaphor – that of Tevye's daughters (after Sholem Aleichem and *Fiddler on the Roof*) and their different, interlocking fates. Beilke went to America; Chava (as Slezkine parses Aleichem's story) ended up in Israel; while Hodl married a Revolutionary and, Slezkine proposes, became a member of the Soviet secular metropolitan elite like his own grandmother, Brokhe. *The Jewish Century* is mainly about Hodl, but Beilke and Chava are nevertheless important presences.

In Slezkine's typology of Mercurians and Apollonians, 'the United States stood for unabashed Mercurianism,' while in Palestine/Israel, by contrast, 'the world's most proficient service nomads' were doing their best to turn themselves into nation-building Apollonians. The similarity of ethos between Zionist settlers and Soviet Revolutionaries, both sharing 'a messianic promise of imminent collective redemption and more or less miraculous collective transfiguration', does not escape Slezkine: 'Chava's children were living a revolution of their own – building, consistently and unapologetically, socialism in one country.' But he is most intrigued by the comparison between the fate of Jews in the Soviet Union and in the United States.

In both countries, 'the children of Jewish immigrants were going to school at about the same time and with the same degree of eagerness and excellence. In both places, the dramatic expansion of the educational systems coincided with the Jewish influx and helped accommodate it. And in both places, there arose – eventually – "the Jewish problem" of excessive success,' leading to attempts to limit Jewish upward mobility. In the 1930s, in a paradoxical development noted by Slezkine, both Soviet and American institutions of higher education were producing a generation of Jewish Communists contemptuous of their parents and eager to forget the shtetl. In the 1940s and early 1950s, as the Soviet Union was conducting its anti-Jewish campaign, so 'the United States Congress was conducting its own purge. In scale and severity it was not

comparable to the Stalinist version, but the targets came from similar backgrounds and had similar convictions – except that in the Soviet Union they were persecuted as Jews, and in the United States as Communists.' As in the Soviet Union, this led to a rediscovery of Jewishness, both in the sense of nostalgia for the shtetl and the embrace of Zionism by the new generation.

Thus, Hodl's choice of promised land, once envied by Beilke's children and admired by Chava's, now ceded place to Chava's choice – Israel. Moreover, all three sets of Tevye's grandchildren – children of Hodl, Beilke and Chava – roundly condemned Hodl's choice; and even Hodl herself, Slezkine's grandmother, Brokhe, who came back from Argentina to join the Revolution, repented of it. Samuil Agursky came back from America after the Revolution and named his son Melib, for Marx-Engels-Liebknecht. On her deathbed, his wife told their son (now innocuously renamed Mikhail) that 'I should have lived my life very differently,' to which he replied that he had always told her so. Slezkine's book is not an 'I told you so' to his grandmother: rather, it is an exploration of what her life and that of her generation meant. There are shafts of pathos, indignation and contempt in his narrative (the last usually associated with something Soviet), as well as a pervasive irony and love of paradox familiar to readers of his earlier work. It is Slezkine's great merit to have found a way of writing passionately while maintaining balance and a certain detachment. *The Jewish Century* – like Peter Novick's different but equally remarkable *The Holocaust in American Life (1999)* – is an opinionated, idiosyncratic and exciting book that achieves fairmindedness so casually it seems like an accident.

[*] I should say straightaway that Slezkine was a PhD student of mine in the 1980s – his subject was the 'small peoples of the Siberian north' – and that more recently we edited together a collection of interviews with Soviet women, *In the Shadow of Revolution* (2000). I also read an early draft of *The Jewish Century*.

[†] See *Stalin's Secret Pogrom: The Postwar Inquisition of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee*, edited by Joshua Rubenstein and Vladimir Naumov, translated by Laura Esther Wolfson (2001).

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Letters

Vol. 27 No. 7 · 31 March 2005

Is Sheila Fitzpatrick sure of what she means when she talks about ‘the Bukharin/*Darkness at Noon* model of confessing everything, no matter how bizarre the accusations, “for the good of the cause”’ (*LRB*, 17 March)? That was indeed what Koestler’s fictional Old Bolshevik did, but it wasn’t what Bukharin did. Bukharin confessed because his family was threatened. So the confidently inserted forward slash is a mark of falsification, not punctuation.

There are more falsification marks in Slavoj Žižek’s piece in the same issue. Telling us how ‘the “pure” liberal attitude’ of finding Fascism and Communism ‘both bad’ is ‘a priori false’, he leaves, to those of us who think that they were indeed both bad, the task of fighting off the imputation that we are either impure liberals or that liberalism is impure in itself. He should be encouraged to put away his inverted commas until he can use them responsibly. In his very next sentence he even uses them against himself: ‘It is necessary to take sides and proclaim Fascism fundamentally “worse” than Communism.’ Unless ‘worse’ means worse, the sentence means nothing. If it means what it would mean without the inverted commas, then there is a simple answer: it isn’t necessary. Without the slightest bow to Ernst Nolte, you can take sides against both of the totalitarianisms put together. In fact you can’t be a liberal if you don’t.

No kind of liberal, whether pure or impure, needs to waste time deciding which had the harder surface, the hammer or the anvil. As the German Social Democrats of the 1930s discovered when they were caught between them, all that mattered was the impact. Those who survived gave much of the impetus to the ‘postwar European identity’ that Žižek touchingly believes is based solely on ‘anti-Fascist unity’. So that’s what the Bundeswehr was doing: warding off the return of the Nazis.

The Bolsheviks did indeed release all kinds of constructive energies, as did the Nazis in their turn. But in both cases the destructive energies were released simultaneously, and eventually the poison settled the fate of everything that grew. The disturbing thing for liberals now is that there are still so many *gauchiste* intellectuals who persist in believing that the roots of injustice might be found in liberal democracy itself, and the roots of justice in some version of unlimited, self-perpetuating power. Generously ready to concede that the second thing might sometimes go wrong, they nevertheless earn their living from reminding the first thing that freedom is an illusion. They are free to do so, and will never be short of evidence; but their position is false, and their marks of falsification are the tip-off.

Clive James
Cambridge

The Rise and Fall of the Baggy-Trousered Barbarians

Sheila Fitzpatrick

- *Vixi: Memoirs of a Non-Belonger* by Richard Pipes
  Yale, 264 pp, £19.95, January 2004, ISBN 0 300 10165 1
- *Adventures in Russian Historical Research: Reminiscences of American Scholars from the Cold War to the Present* edited by Samuel Baron and Cathy Frierson
  Sharpe, 272 pp, £18.50, June 2003, ISBN 0 7656 1197 X

Richard Pipes, Russian historian at Harvard and sometime member of President Reagan's National Security Council, is famous for his hatred of Communism. He doesn't like Russia much, either. Nor does he particularly care for most Russia and Soviet experts, regarding them as given to romanticising and whitewashing their subject. Worst of all are 'revisionist' Soviet historians in the United States and Britain, whose effort to write 'history from below', starting in the 1970s, he has denounced as wrongheaded and politically suspect. As I am one whom he has often chastised (most recently in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*), I approached his book warily. But against my will I enjoyed most of it. Pipes has not acquired the plastic veneer of most public men in America. He tells things as he sees them – which isn't to say he necessarily sees them right – and does not touch up his self-portrait. And he's an iconoclast, a trait I have always found attractive. To be sure, it's baffling that he managed to find so much Soviet-loving, 'soft-on-Communism' conventional wisdom in the United States to challenge; my own experiences in that regard were diametrically opposite. Still, he got there first by some thirty years. And things may be different at Harvard.

Those who know Pipes only as a hardliner during the Cold War heyday of the Reagan years may doubt his credentials as an iconoclast. But what else is one to call someone who invokes Lytton Strachey (twice!) as an exemplar in the writing of history and quotes with approval Samuel Butler's 'I never write on any subject unless I believe the opinion of those who have the ear of the public to be mistaken'? Moreover, Pipes's

historical work has challenged a variety of received opinions: that 1917 was a social revolution; that Marxist ideology rather than Russian tradition is the key to understanding the Soviet Union, and so on.

The prickly independence of spirit that made Pipes a congenital ‘non-belonger’, though a very well-connected and influential one, was directed not only at other Russian and Soviet historians but at most intellectual communities he encountered. American political correctness, Harvard complacency and, especially, the pressure to conform within the American historical profession are soundly criticised: ‘I could never abide "group think".’ Nor could he abide cultivating the goodwill of colleagues by citing their work, attending their conferences, contributing to their symposia, or following other unwritten rules of behaviour. ‘Those who do not play by the rules or significantly depart from the consensus risk ostracism,’ he writes, obviously with reference to himself: ‘such behaviour, observed also in animal communities, strengthens group cohesion and enhances the sense of security of its individual members, but inhibits creativity.’

Growing up in prewar Warsaw as the pampered only child of comfortably-off parents (the family business was chocolate-making), Pipes wasn’t interested in politics; art, music and philosophy were more his thing. His parents, Jewish but non-observant, spoke German and Polish. The Soviet Union did not loom large in their son’s consciousness. In the late 1930s, when Pipes was a teenager, he heard ‘muffled sounds of appalling events taking place in the Soviet Union, but I had no idea what these were and I was not terribly interested in finding out’. It was only after the family’s move to the US in 1940 and the beginning of a new life for Pipes as a student at Muskingum College in Ohio that the Soviet Union finally caught his attention, and even then it was largely for pragmatic reasons: ‘In fall 1942 it dawned on me that given the closeness between the Polish and Russian languages, I could easily learn Russian . . . I think what I had vaguely in mind was that upon being inducted into military service, as seemed inevitable, I could put the knowledge of Russian to good use.’ This is what happened; and, when he started graduate studies at Harvard after demobilisation, he decided – almost accidentally, as he describes it – to specialise in Russian intellectual history.

The explanation for Pipes’s perceived anti-Russianness that one often hears from his detractors is simply that he is a Pole. Pipes concedes that ‘coming from Poland, a country which had bordered Russia for a thousand years and lived under its

occupation for over a century', he may have 'unconsciously shared Polish attitudes towards Russia', but adds with a note of bewilderment: 'I must have absorbed them from the air because . . . while in Poland I had no interest in our eastern neighbour.' This uncharacteristic admission of prejudice may be misplaced; it certainly fails to account for the intensity of Pipes's moral outrage against the Soviet Union. In fact, on my reading of the data Pipes gives us, he didn't start out anti-Russian, and it was not even Communism that first provoked the feelings of outrage. What he felt on his own skin was the German occupation of Poland in 1939; to a Germanophile family like Pipes's this surely felt like a betrayal. But the real outrage came with the realisation in 1945 of the magnitude of the Holocaust and news of the deaths of friends and members of his family left behind in Europe. It was the Holocaust that made Pipes feel he had a mission 'to spread a moral message by showing, using examples from history, how evil ideas lead to evil consequences'. In short, the original target, for which the Soviet Union was to become a surrogate, was Nazi Germany.

Not long ago, the *American Historical Review* published an article by Kate Brown – which Pipes surely disliked, if he read it – with the arresting subtitle 'Why Kazakhstan and Montana are Nearly the Same Place'. In the old days, it was Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union that were 'nearly the same place', and the underpinning for the comparison was the theory of totalitarianism. Pipes, though never much of a theory man, accepted this paradigm, which was in the air in his early Harvard years; and he (like many others) attached to it a moral outrage sharpened by the war and the postwar Holocaust revelations. One may wonder why, if the criminal regime Pipes really wanted to denounce was Nazism, he opted instead for the Soviet surrogate. 'Since scholars have written enough on the Holocaust,' he writes, 'I thought it my mission to demonstrate this truth using the example of Communism': but in the 1950s, when Pipes made this choice, study of Nazi Germany was in its infancy and scholarship on the Holocaust scarcely existed. Elsewhere Pipes gives the more plausible explanation that the Holocaust struck too close to home for him to study it or the Nazi regime without pain. He reproaches himself for this instinctive desire to avoid dwelling on details of the Holocaust but 'stuck to it for the sake of my sanity and positive approach to life'.

For his sanity, therefore, Pipes turned on the Soviet Union, whose evils he denounced harshly and vigorously, but with a certain emotional detachment, for most of his

career. Only when writing *The Russian Revolution* in the 1980s – the scholarly book he values most and his colleagues value least – did this detachment fail and the process of writing become almost unbearably painful, evidently because he was again in 'the same place' as Nazi Germany: the Russian Communists' behaviour 'reminded me time and again of the Nazis'; in the murder of the Russian imperial family, he smelt 'a whiff of the Holocaust'.

To be sure, close encounters with the Soviet Union soon provided Pipes with grounds for dislike. On his first short trip there in 1957 (en route to India, where he was to deliver lectures on his Soviet journey for the Congress on Cultural Freedom), his Intourist guide was 'a heavily made-up woman in her thirties with the repulsive expression of a professional KGB agent' and Leningrad seemed full of badly dressed people, 'culturally and even physically the most backward elements of Russia's rural population', looking 'like barbarian invaders who had conquered and taken over what had once been a flourishing centre of civilisation'. When Pipes visited relatives, he was followed, and this surveillance depressed him; he found 'the pervasive lying' and hypocrisy in the Soviet Union deeply offensive. Surprisingly, in light of his later policy positions, he expressed doubts to sceptical 'high-level Nato officials' – he was already moving in such circles – 'that a country so poor and so backward presented a serious threat to us'.

We are now reaching the point in Pipes's career where his experiences overlap with those of the 20 American historians of Russia who contributed their memories of life in the Soviet Union as official exchange scholars to *Adventures in Russian Historical Research*. As always, Pipes is a 'non-belonger' or at least an outrider in this group. On his first – and, for many years, his only – research trip to the Soviet Union in 1962, things started promisingly, with 'the entire history department of Leningrad University' at the station to greet him. His lectures on 19th-century Russian conservatism produced a gratifying sensation, and kind Soviet scholars got him black-market penicillin when he became ill. All this might have softened his view of Russia, had it not been for his irrepressible iconoclasm, directed on this occasion against a Soviet sacred cow: the regime's historic ties with the working class. Pipes's debunking book on this theme, *Social Democracy and the St Petersburg Labour Movement 1885-97*, published in 1963, quickly produced a campaign of vilification in the Soviet Union

that included the publication of a book-length diatribe entitled *Mr Pipes Falsifies History*.

This was the beginning of Pipes's career as a demon in anti-Western propaganda. His Soviet reputation grew even blacker in the 1970s when he became politically active as a member of the notorious Team B, which charged that the CIA had underestimated the Soviet threat, and then of the Committee on the Present Danger, arguing that Soviet Communism was inherently expansionist and an imminent danger to the United States. When he was appointed to the National Security Council after Reagan's victory in 1980, *Pravda* greeted his appointment with a hostility that Pipes more than returned. 'I felt nothing but pride at having aroused so much animosity – and, presumably, anxiety – among such vile people.'

There was anxiety, too, among Pipes's students and colleagues. When he became a member of the National Security Council, the editors of *Adventures in Russian Historical Research*write, 'our identity as US historians of Russia, funded by the US government, became acutely suspect.' One of the editors, Cathy Frierson, who was a student of Pipes's at Harvard, made the mistake of admitting this connection in her application and as a result became a 'target for Soviet anger', and was denied access to key archives. For the exchange scholars – a couple of dozen each year from the United States, mainly graduate students in history and literature, with a comparable contingent from Britain under the auspices of the British Council – the Soviet Union was enough of a hardship post already. (I was there myself, thanks to the British Council, for 18 months in 1966-70.) Living conditions were spartan, basic goods including food in short supply, spy mania in the air and suspicion of foreigners endemic. In my time, at least, one or two exchange scholars each year got into trouble with the Soviets and were sent home, ending any prospects of future research in the Soviet Union. Western scholarship on the Soviet Union – not just Pipes's work – was regularly assailed as 'bourgeois falsification', though when this happened to Laura Engelstein, one of the contributors to*Adventures in Russian Historical Research*, with her book on the 1905 revolution in Moscow, she was judged guilty only of an 'excess of liberal naivety, not ideological malice like a certain Mr Richard Pipes'. My first scholarly article was denounced in a Soviet newspaper in 1968 under the heading 'He Who Is Obliged to Hide the Truth'. Such 'ideological saboteurs' were 'not that different from bourgeois spies', the reviewer noted ominously: fortunately Soviet incompetence

was such that nobody noticed that the man who was the next thing to a spy was actually a woman currently in the Soviet Union on the British Council exchange.

For all Pipes's suspicions of the Russophiliac and Soviet-appeasing tendencies of American scholars, the *Adventures* group doesn't come across that way. Frederick Starr remembers his cohort in the late 1960s as convinced that culture was more important than politics, and proud of the 'irrelevance' of their research. For some exchangees, interest in studying Russian history had something to do with having parents or grandparents who had come from Russia and/or admired the 'Soviet experiment'. But feelings about roots can be ambivalent, as with Engelstein's Yiddish-speaking Russian-Jewish family, whose hopes of, and later disappointment with, the Russian Revolution coexisted with memories of Russian anti-semitism: 'Of course I feel some kind of (complicated) pull,' Engelstein writes; yet when asked if she had a Russian background, she would always say no. The stories told here are notably lacking in the respectful affection for the place of study and its cultural traditions (as distinct from affection for individuals) that is common currency in many 'exotic' fields such as Sinology or (in the US) British studies.

The great passion of the historians on the exchanges was archives. These were difficult for anyone to get into, even Petrine scholars, but particularly so for those studying the Soviet period, whose numbers increased exponentially in the 1970s and 1980s. It may have seemed to Pipes in one of his relatively few Soviet archival forays that he alone was the subject of 'stinginess' and discrimination, receiving only one folder a day while 'by contrast, one of my American colleagues known for his friendly attitude toward the regime, sitting at a nearby desk, all but drowned in documents.' But 'stinginess' was the norm and outright refusal to grant access to archives not uncommon. That was why the game was so engrossing, so unlike the normal grind of archival research: as Don Raleigh writes, one 'experienced not only great personal satisfaction but also a strange sensation of doing something risqué and forbidden' when one worked in a Soviet archive.

It was in the nature of this game that exchange scholars should collectively have seen Soviet officialdom as the opponent, if not the enemy. 'The guardians of Soviet orthodoxy were not wrong about me,' Engelstein writes. 'I was bound and determined to say something that went against the grain.' Beating the system was a universal preoccupation among exchangees. Or, perhaps more accurately, beating both systems,

since the constraints often came from the US/UK side as well as the Soviet. Finding Russian friends and lovers was one of the main system-beating activities, since neither side looked on this with favour. But how could the exchangees have resisted? Not only were they young, they were the only resident foreigners who lived side by side with Russians, making them the envy of diplomats and journalists holed up in foreigners' compounds.

What fascinated the contributors to *Adventures in Russian Historical Research* was how different Soviet life as they experienced it was from its ideologically charged Western representation; how much informal practices and official structures diverged; and how Soviet citizens managed to negotiate these contradictions and find themselves more or less comfortable niches. Starr describes very well his discovery that for the people he met the 'greatest pleasure in life derived not from participation in the Soviet system but from the micro-worlds they . . . had laboriously constructed in the invisible crannies of that system'. With this discovery, he writes, it became 'increasingly difficult for me to take seriously most of the pompous generalisations about the nature of the Soviet Union that had been concocted by political scientists in the West' relying " on abstract theories and sanitised information from official Soviet sources. 'Is it any wonder that they missed most of what was going on?' Starr came to see the Soviet system as resembling 'a broken and uneven old sidewalk, with no few hard spots but with fresh green grass sprouting up everywhere between the constantly expanding and multiplying cracks'.

For historians, this worm's-eye view accorded perfectly with the new social-history interests of the profession in the 1970s and 1980s. In the Soviet field, the turn to 'history from below' was almost synonymous with what became known pejoratively as 'revisionism', meaning the abandonment by historians and political scientists of 'top down' totalitarianism as a basic conceptual framework; and the 'from below' methodology was often coupled with criticism of the value-loaded 'Cold War' premises of the totalitarian model. As it happens, the *Adventures*contingent includes only a few who could be categorised as revisionists. All the same, most of them share the interest in history from below, as their studies of the provinces, the weakness of central bureaucracy, rural life and attitudes, marginal social groups, and popular revolution indicate.

To Pipes, this approach was anathema. In the first place, he believes that popular experience is not what matters in human history. Observing the quick return to normality in occupied Poland in 1939-40, he was amazed to see 'how quickly the everyday overwhelms the historic', and acquired a lasting conviction that 'the population at large plays only a marginal role in history, or at any rate in political and military history, which is the preserve of small elites: people do not make history – they make a living.' Did the masses clamour for the world wars in which they were to be slaughtered? he asks rhetorically. This question might have a different answer, of course, if one substituted 'revolution and civil war' for 'world wars'. For Pipes, however, the occupation analogy would probably still hold good, with the Bolsheviks in Russia in 1917 'nearly the same' as the Germans in Poland in 1939.

Pipes's second and more familiar objection to history from below is that in its revisionist application it occluded the crimes of rulers and undermined the only morally acceptable approach to Soviet history – which is from a stance of explicit condemnation. This occlusion, he has always assumed, was ideologically motivated: it was the revisionists' aim to 'justify' and 'whitewash' the Soviet regime. And not just the revisionists. As I said, Pipes has been singularly, almost bizarrely, unfortunate in the strata of American public opinion with which he has come in contact. According to his observations, 'the entire [American] intelligentsia, especially those who engaged in academic work, in varying degrees sympathised with the Communist experiment.' In addition, American political scientists studying the Soviet Union (to other eyes an almost uniformly anti-Communist and anti-Soviet community) 'had a considerable stake in depicting the Soviet Union as a powerful yet reasonable rival in order both to encourage the flow of scholarly subsidies from the government and foundations and to secure Soviet co-operation in their researches'.

Revisionists were the biggest villains, however, especially when their conspiracy 'to impose control on the teaching of modern Russian history' triumphed in American academia. 'In a manner which I believe was new to American academic life though familiar from the history of Bolshevism, they strove and largely succeeded in monopolising the profession, ensuring that university chairs in that field across the country went to their adherents. This entailed ostracising scholars known to hold different views.' Extraordinary behaviour, indeed – but didn't Pipes tell us that in American academia, 'those who do not play by the rules or significantly depart from

the consensus' always 'risk ostracism'? Be that as it may, Pipes is indignant at the unfairness of it all: instead of the revisionists losing, as they deserved to, it looks as if they won.

In an age of postmodern relativism, there is something touching in Pipes's view of intellectual debate as a matter of winning or losing and absolute truth versus absolute falsehood. In rebuttal, one could invoke Kuhnian notions of paradigm shift, pointing out that each new scholarly generation is revisionist of its predecessors, and it's therefore in the nature of the thing for revisionists to 'win' – at least until the next generation comes along. But Pipes wants, perhaps even deserves, a real answer to his critique of revisionism. Let me try to give it. In his version, Cold Warriors like himself said that the Soviet Union was dangerous and evil and, because of its evilness, unpopular with its own people, and, because of its unpopularity, inherently unstable. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 proved them right. The revisionists (again in Pipes's rendition) insisted that the Soviet regime had popular support and thus could never be overthrown: 1991 proved them wrong and their work (along with most American Sovietology, but that is another question) worthless.

Putting to one side the red herring of 'stability' (a claim of political scientists, not even specifically revisionist, in the 1980s to which historians paid little attention), and resisting the urge to argue that 1991 actually tends to disprove Pipes's assertion that the Soviet Union constituted a 'present danger' to the rest of the world, I will focus on the issue of social support. It was a basic premise of the Western Soviet historians who turned to social history in the 1970s that high politics and terror couldn't explain everything: something had to be happening in the society. They looked first to see what social support the regime had, starting with the Revolution of 1917 and Russian workers. What they found was that the Bolsheviks had substantial working-class support in 1917, but that things got dicey once the Party was in power. Possibly some revisionists initially expected another outcome, perhaps even something like the mystical marriage uniting workers and Bolsheviks that is enshrined in the official Soviet version of Soviet history. If so, they must have been disappointed and reframed their questions, as social scientists are supposed to do if data and hypotheses are out of sync, for revisionist scholarship contains no extravagant claims about working-class support for the Soviet regime in the 1920s and 1930s.

The second revisionist line on social support was the idea (for which I am responsible) that the new elite formed in the Stalin period consisted in large part of individuals who had moved rapidly upwards from the lower classes in Soviet times, felt themselves to be beneficiaries and favoured sons of the regime, and were appropriately grateful and loyal. Soviet propagandists could claim this as a glorious vindication of the Revolution's promise that 'workers should become masters,' but any Marxist – and that included some of my fellow revisionists – could see that in terms of serious Marxist theory of revolution it was a mockery. (For this reason, my idea was for a while almost as unpopular with revisionists as with Pipes.) Another way of looking at this particular process of elite formation is that it was the prehistory of those 'vile people' whose loyalty to the Soviet regime Pipes himself has never questioned: the baggy-trousered barbarians, parvenus full of their own power and privilege, whom he and the rest of us encountered in their capacity as officials in the post-Stalin period.

Revisionists might have pushed their 'social support' arguments further but for two circumstances. One was that peasants – among whom much support for the Soviet regime was neither expected nor found – came to occupy much of the attention of social historians. The paradigm here was resistance (the opposite of support); and by the 1990s, the resistance paradigm was being applied beyond peasants to the whole terrain of the everyday. Survival strategies, exclusion practices, patronage, petitioning, denunciation, and the whole informal side of life – the grass sprouting up between the cracks – became central social-historical concerns. In the light of the testimony offered by *Adventures*, this can be seen as a belated application to scholarship of our own earlier everyday experiences in the Soviet Union, but it was also to some degree provoked by the remarkable spectacle of a Soviet everyday surviving the collapse of the old political structures, behind the incongruous new façade of McDonald's and pizza parlours.

The other circumstance was the tremendous bullying revisionists got from the old guard (qv Pipes on ostracism) in the 1970s and early 1980s. In terms of 'keeping a positive outlook on life', it was a whole lot easier to study resistance (I did it myself) than social support, and surely at some level this was part of the dynamics. But now comes the irony. As time passed, a new cohort of historians came along, interested in cultural and intellectual rather than social history, self-consciously post and often anti-revisionist. They resisted the resistance paradigm, objecting to its implication that the

social history of the Stalin period was all about estrangement and opting out. On the contrary, they argued, Stalinism – 'Stalinist civilisation', in Stephen Kotkin's phrase – was the creation of Soviet citizens, not an alien value system forced on them by the regime: it was the worldview they grew up with, the only one they knew. In effect, this was a culturalist equivalent of the broadest possible 'social support' claim, magically depoliticised and legitimised by reference to Foucault. The revisionists could scarce forbear to cheer, if a little wistfully. They were singing our song.

Pipes might say (but let him say it to Kotkin) that 'Stalinist civilisation' was a mere blip, perhaps even a mirage, on the 73-year journey towards systemic collapse that was inexorably set in motion in 1917. And that might provoke others to marvel that a historian should be so deeply uninterested in change over time, and that an inveterate anti-Marxist should be left holding the banner of historical inevitability dropped by Soviet Marxist-Leninists. But it is churlish for a revisionist to insist on these polemical points. After all, we have Pipes's (if not Kotkin's) word for it: we won.

Diary

Mary-Kay Wilmers

A distant relative of mine was a general in the KGB. 'As long as I live,' Stalin said of him, 'not a hair of his head shall be touched.' Stalin didn't keep his word – which can't have been wholly surprising even then. Unlike many of his colleagues, however, my relative wasn't shot: he was beaten and tortured and kept in prison for 12 years. He died in 1981 with – I've been told – a portrait of Stalin by his bed.

I am intrigued by his story and by his connection with the rest of my family, the last of whom left Russia in the first years of the Revolution. (My mother and her sisters were in Moscow in 1917: when I asked them what they did during that time they said they played cards: children in one room, grown-ups in the other.) None of those who are alive now – about the previous generation, who can say? – had ever heard of this KGB relative until an article in *Life*Magazine revealed the identity of Trotsky's assassin, a Spanish Communist called Ramon Mercader, and that of his mentor, my relative, Leonid Eitingon.

For the fact of his being a relative the evidence, despite my efforts, is only circumstantial. I have sent my agents to the archives in Minsk, but there is nothing in

writing to prove that the various sets of Eitingons living in a cluster of small towns on the banks of the Dnepr in the late 1890s belonged to the same family – though I would be amazed if they didn't. A Soviet intelligence officer could be shot merely for having family in the West and when, in 1991, I went to Moscow for the first time to visit my putative relatives, Leonid's children and grandchildren, they were willing enough to see me but reluctant to accept that I was anything other than an Englishwoman with a bee in her bonnet.

The first indication that we might belong to the same family and that some of his relatives might have known some of mine came last year from a cousin of Leonid's, an old lady called Revekka who remembers meeting one of my great-uncles in Moscow in the late Twenties. My great-uncle was by then an American and very rich. Revekka's mother, who was very poor, hoped that if the rich American saw her young daughter, he would give her some money – which he did. He called Revekka a little flower and gave her 100 dollars. But Revekka wasn't pleased. Not only did she feel that her mother had tricked her, she didn't like the compliment either. By the time she got home, the money had gone, been lost or mislaid. A month or so later, when she and her mother moved flats, it turned up. She doesn't remember how it was spent, except that she got something she'd always wanted: a raspberry-coloured beret like the one Tatiana has in *Eugene Onegin*.

I was in Moscow again ten days ago, for reasons I'll come to. It was looking very beautiful, though it's not a place that I generally like. In fact, I quite often hate it. The city is too big (you are forever travelling, as it were, from Norwood to Highgate), the roads are too wide (wherever you go an eight-lane highway to cross), the drivers unbelievably heedless. Most people, you feel, would just as soon you weren't there. Not because they see you as the enemy or even the former enemy: they simply have no interest in you at all. No one in the street ever smiles. If you buy something they bark, if you ask the way they don't answer or answer over their shoulder, walking away. At first 'our victory' was an embarrassment. Now it's more straightforwardly a nightmare, or *cauchemar*, as the Russians say – odd that they don't have their own word for it. It may seem in order to Milton Friedman that Russian citizens trade in dollars as much as in roubles, that the road from the airport into town is marked by a procession of billboards advertising ventures with fly-by-night names like Inkombank and Discountbank, that most of the ads on the Metro – ads on the Metro! – invite you to

get rich as fast as you can, but not even Friedman would say this is capitalism with a human face.

In the cause of getting rich quick 63 foreigners have been murdered in Moscow this year. (Moscow is the only place I've ever heard shots being fired – quite a few.) Under the ancien regime it was the rough-handedness of the state that you had to watch out for: now it's scary wherever you look. (My distant relative, I should explain, worked abroad: it wasn't he who sent men at night to knock on your door.) In summer the sky is still a luminous blue at one or two o'clock in the morning, but the streets are scarcely lit; the Metro is thought not to be safe, taxis even less so. A few days ago our contributor, R.W. Johnson, a big man but in Moscow an obvious foreigner, was set upon by a gang of ten-year-olds on Gorky Street at midday. His clothes were ripped; he was lucky, he said, to have escaped with his life.

In the block of flats where I was staying there were two families sharing a two-room flat. Nothing unusual about that. (When my distant relative first lived in Moscow he had a large room in the centre of town. His mother came to live with him there and when he was sent abroad in the Twenties, the old lady, her two daughters, their husbands and eventually their children all lived in that room and went on doing so for the next thirty years.) In the present case, however, one room was bigger than the other and in the larger of the two an old man lived on his own while a young couple with a child had to make do with the smaller one. The young man asked the old man if he would swop: in fact, he asked so often that in April the old man shot him. Now the old man is still living in the big room and the woman and her child are on their own in the smaller one.

Komunalkas, as such flats are called, won't disappear immediately thanks to capitalism, but more is in hand than one might have expected. Cranes no longer stand still on building sites; in one neighbourhood all the pipes were being replaced, in another the telephone cables. There is more food than there was, and however extreme the rate of inflation, pensions too have increased. So when you look out of your window in the early morning you don't see what used to be the first familiar sight of the day: large women in padded clothes shuffling towards the neighbourhood bread queue. And if you're a visitor about your business in the middle of Moscow, and you'd like to sit down, you no longer have to take a trip on the Metro: there are places to sit, even cafés, in the centre of town. There is, for example, in addition to the flagship of capitalism in

Pushkin Square, a new kind of McDonald's, a pseudo-modish café on the modish Arbat (the street where in pre-Revolutionary times my great-aunt Bertha had her dental practice). Prospective travellers to Moscow might like to think of arranging their visit before there's a Dunkin' Donuts next to the new McDonald's and every neighbourhood has its own Body Shop.

It's all part of the Eurofication of the Soviet Union. (What happened to the cafés that must have existed in Tsarist times: was it policy to close them down?) Trams rattle late into the night along the street I stay on: a reminder of the end of Mikhail Alexandrovich Berlioz, the literary editor in *The Master and Margarita* who thought he knew it all. The trams used to be white and red and a little dishevelled: now some are a spanking bright blue and have Panasonic written on the front in large letters. Like much else in Moscow, they're being taken over, Eurofied. It struck me this time that the rebarbative Stalinist skyscrapers had retreated into the background, as if in the new capitalist Russia they had given way to the pre-Revolutionary buildings they themselves replaced. From my room, I see a group of dusty buildings, dressed in a rough compound with trees and a square of parched grass at the centre, framing a couple of rusty swings. In the next street along, a main road, there are large ramshackle apartment houses, reminiscent of Rome in their weight and their colour, irregular, dilapidated, stagey. In the event of a thunderstorm the heavy stone balconies are liable to break away from their moorings and tumble into the street. At one point my distant relative lived not far from here, in a handsome, pre-Revolutionary block. In other parts of the city, the neo-classical centre especially, restored thanks to JVs (joint ventures) with the Germans, the Finns or the Italians, there's a distinct whiff of Covent Garden – the Euro-heritage that one day will stretch from the Atlantic to the Urals.

Sometimes as I walk past some newly manicured bit of Moscow I wonder what my distant relative Leonid would make of these changes. But I only know – or think I know – what he would have said, because it's what most former party members say when you ask them: 'times change and one has to change with them.' (You can always recognise a party member by his reluctance to say anything of interest.) A couple of years ago I went, as I then thought very bravely, to interview Leonid's former KGB boss, Pavel Sudoplatov, a very old and once a very powerful man; in the words of the *New York Times*, 'the last of Stalin's wolves'. As Stalin's wolf, he fell from favour when Stalin died, spent 15 years in prison and emerged in 1968, unrepentant and

disgraced. He'd been 'a spy', he said, 'a professional since 1921', when he was 'still a teenager'. As a professional he told me nothing. Now he has published his memoirs in English, French and German. ('I don't like to see my name in print,' he said when I first met him.) The book, *Special Tasks: The Memoirs of an Unwanted Witness*, was written with his son Anatoli and – I would have thought uniquely in the annals of war and its aftermath – two Americans, Jerrold and Leona Schecter, who not only translated the material but effectively made of it a book Americans would want to read.[*]

Americans may or may not he reading it: they have certainly been reading about it. In the mid-Forties General Sudoplatov was in charge of atomic espionage – of the flow of information from Los Alamos to Moscow. In 1992 when I asked him about this part of his working life (my distant relative was at this point his deputy) he was outraged: 'The American bomb,' he screeched, 'was made by foreigners, by immigrants ... *We* did it all by ourselves, with our own scientists, our *atomshiki*.' Since then he has evidently changed his mind about what to say, because in *Special Tasks he* makes what has come to be seen as the electrifying claim that the parents of the American bomb, Oppenheimer, Fermi, Bohr and Szilard, were not only keen that their knowledge be shared with the Soviets, but one way or another made sure that it was. In America the response has been unanimous: as far as I know, there is no one who has written on the subject who hasn't been outraged. Many people in Russia, too, are outraged, the scientists especially, who don't want to hear what General Sudoplatov pretended not to want to hear when I talked to him: that Kurchatov and Co were merely following a recipe. One of the peculiarities of the new Russia is that in a newspaper still named in honour of the Komsomol movement it's possible to treat the whole business with evenhanded irony:

American and Soviet physicists have been disturbed by the memoirs of Pavel Sudoplatov ... The American people are disturbed and saddened. Sudoplatov's book came out them and they discovered damaging facts about their heroes. The Russian people are quiet ... We have more pressing reasons to be sad. But our physicists are very upset. If we are to believe Sudo platov we stole the atom bomb. The American physicists blurted the secret out to Soviet spies, the Soviet spies transmined the information to Beria, Beria gave it to Kurchatov and Kurchatov made the bomb. No

one wants to believe Sudoplatov. It could be that the American physicists were traitors and ours … mmm. Shaming.

Moskovsky Komsomalets, 29 June

General Sudoplatov's book was the reason for my visit to Moscow. The Russians have only read extracts from it, and may not be allowed to read more, though a translation is due at the end of the year. At present the two Sudoplatovs are under interrogation – the General, because he is old and unwell, at home, his son at the offices of the military procurator. Neither is being tortured, no one is pulling out their teeth as they did Leonid's, but there is a chance that they will have to stand trial for betraying state secrets. Or they may be stripped of their honours: the son, who teaches at Moscow University, would no longer have the title of Academician, the father would be un-rehabilitated and with that lose his pension.

Many people besides the physicists wouldn't be shocked if that happened: the children of the General's former colleagues and employees, for example, who don't like the way he has spoken about their fathers – truthfully or untruthfully, I can't always judge, but more informatively than they are used to and more self-servingly than he should have. There are those, too, who say that it is inappropriate to receive a pension from the KGB and then spill its beans and those who believe that in speaking of the past one should respect the traditions of the past; that one should not disclose people's names or say in the manner of today, 'I was responsible for X's assassination,' but instead: 'I fulfilled a very important party task.'

I was with Nikolai Khokhlov, one of the General's former intelligence officers, who now lives in the West, when he bought a copy of the book. He looked his own name up in the index and discovered something he'd never known: that in 1952 he'd been on the point of murdering Kerensky. Khokhlov's account of the incident is not quite the same as the Sudoplatovs', however. In his own book, *In the Name of Conscience* (1959), he describes himself as having had enough of killing and refusing to go to Paris to liquidate the unnamed enemy; he even praises Sudoplatov for letting him get away with it when it would have been more normal to have him shot. As the General now tells it, Khokhlov had simply shown himself to be an incompetent agent and, in any case, the operation was called off. Who knows the real reason – if there was a real reason – why Kerensky wasn't shot? But it's unlikely that Khokhlov was incompetent if, of all their agents, the KGB had chosen him for the job. There was certainly a look of

triumph on his face after he'd read the book: he may not have wanted to be an agent but pride, too, was at stake. A few days later he said: 'You know, I saved Kerensky's life,"

[*] *Special Tasks: The Memoirs of an Unwanted Witness – A Soviet Spymaster* by Pavel Sudoplatov and Anatoli Sudoplatov, with Jerrold and Leona Schecter. Little Brown, 509 pp., £18.99, 19 April, 0 316 91217 4.

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Letters

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I was so totally engrossed in Mary-Kay Wilmers's account of her NKVD forebear (*LRB*, 4 August) that I almost missed the far-too-casual reference to the outrageous mugging of R.W. Johnson by a gang of ten-year-olds in Gorky Street, Moscow. At first sight this might appear to be a case of random violence against foreigners, but I doubt that this was so. R.W. Johnson is a distinguished intellectual with impeccable anti-Stalinist credentials. A relative of Leonid Eitingon should have realised instinctively what was going on here. This was not an instance of freemarket violence. The whole affair smacks of an old-style KGB operation. How could it have escaped Mary-Kay Wilmers that R.W. Johnson was attacked by hoodlums acting under the instructions of ANC veteran Joe Slovo? The ANC High Command wanted to punish Johnson for his courageous articles defending Chief Buthelezi and Inkatha. It would have been too obvious to attack him in South Africa. Hence the attack in Moscow.

Terry Kelly
Trinity College, Dublin

Mary-Kay Wilmers writes: Has Terry Kelly got a summer job at Bandung Productions (prop: Tariq Ali)? The provenance of his fax suggests so.

Vol. 16 No. 18 · 22 September 1994

When I first heard of a book which claimed that Niels Bohr, Enrico Fermi, Leo Szilard and Robert Oppenheimer were Soviet spies, my first reaction was to ignore this as inherently improbable. However, after the experience of finding that Klaus Fuchs, a colleague and collaborator, and, I thought, my friend, was a Soviet spy, I could no longer regard anything as impossible. So one had to look at these things and see what evidence, if any, there was for them.

The book in question, discussed in Mary-Kay Wilmers's Diary (*LRB*, 4 August), is called*Special Tasks*, the memoirs of Pavel Sudoplatov, a former senior official of

the KGB, written with the assistance of his son and two American journalists, Gerrold and Leona Schecter. The book is mostly about the history and the internal quarrels of the KGB and might be of interest to historians. It is in Chapter Seven, devoted to atomic energy – which rumour says was added after the completion of the rest of the book, to increase its public appeal – that we find the strange claims. Nowhere in this chapter is there evidence for these claims, nor documentation, nor verbatim quotations of statements by the people involved. The reader depends entirely on the memory of the senior author.

To examine the case a little more closely let us start with Niels Bohr, the most famous and most respected of the alleged spies. After the end of World War Two, when Bohr had returned to Copenhagen, the Soviet atomic energy project sent an agent to ask him questions about points on which the Soviet project had difficulty at the time. The agent was not, as one might imagine, one of Bohr's old friends, such as Kapitza or Landau (they probably were not trusted), but an intelligence agent, Terletsky, with no particular reputation in physics. He approached Bohr through the Soviet Embassy with a request for a private conversation, and was refused. But Bohr invited him to visit his institute, as he did other physicists. Bohr's son, Aage, was present throughout the meeting with Terletsky and we have his description of the conversation. After some general talk about common friends, Terletsky started to raise questions about the reactor design. Bohr immediately told him that he had no knowledge or details of reactor design, but gave him a copy of the just published Smyth Report of the US Government, which released what was now declassified information.

This account of the interview agrees with the recollection of Terletsky, who was really disappointed at this failure of his mission. However, it strongly disagrees with the account given to Beria in a letter by Kurchatov. This letter claims that Bohr answered the relevant questions and in fact put his finger on the point which was giving the Soviets difficulty; this claim is repeated in a letter from Beria to Stalin, and it was the basis of the statement about Bohr in Sudoplatov's book. We are therefore not dealing with lack of evidence, but with statements contrary to well-documented evidence.

Next, let us look at the case of Leo Szilard, which in a sense is even easier. The book claims that Szilard conspired at Los Alamos to transmit information to the Russians about his work on weapons. The facts are that Szilard never set foot in Los Alamos and that he did not work on weapons but on reactors.

About Fermi and Oppenheimer there are no such glaring contradictions in the book, but of course no positive evidence either. The authors have said in interview that Oppenheimer liked to leave secret documents lying around in his office so that

moles could copy them at night. This naive story ignores two facts: that the security people made a careful search of offices at night, to find any forgotten documents; and also that Oppenheimer as Director of Los Alamos had opportunities to see anybody he wanted privately and give them whatever documents he wished.

I do not think it is worth trying to add to this list to demonstrate the completely baseless accusations in this book. There do, however, remain some interesting questions. Why was the reaction to it so different on the two sides of the Atlantic? The appearance of *Special Tasks* caused an uproar among American scientists and innumerable newspaper pages have been filled with refutations and attacks on the book. In the UK, on the other hand, there has been a much more muted response. Perhaps the difference lies in the fact that the alleged spies are American folk heroes, in a way they are perhaps not in this country. And perhaps in the United States the shock was increased by the fact that normally reputable news organisations, such as the*MacNeil-Lehrer NewsHour*, or *Time* Magazine, appear to have been taken in by the allegations. Whatever the answers, it is clear that the sooner this lamentable piece of pseudo-history is forgotten the better.

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